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Pope Francis receives a music box shaped like a carousel from a boy named Oscar during a visit to the "Luna Park di Ostia" amusement park in Ostia, Italy, July 31, 2024. Seated next to the pope is Sister Geneviève Jeanningros, 81, a Little Sister of Jesus who lives in a trailer on the carnival grounds and provides pastoral care to the workers. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Carol Glatz

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Vatican City — August 1, 2024
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Pope Francis visited an amusement park an hour outside of Rome to greet workers, their families and the two nuns providing pastoral care there.

Sister Geneviève Jeanningros, 81, and Sister Anna Amelia, who are members of the Little Sisters of Jesus, greeted the pope who arrived at the "Luna Park di Ostia" amusement park around 3 p.m. July 31 in a small white Fiat, according to Vatican News.

Jeanningros, who lives in a trailer on the carnival grounds, has been providing pastoral care for circus, carnival and amusement park workers for 56 years. She regularly brings the workers, Roma and transgender people to meet the pope at his Wednesday general audience.

The pope met with amusement park workers and their families in a large room normally reserved for children's birthday parties where he was treated to a small show by a group of acrobats and clowns. They also played a trick on him, handing him a balloon that wasn't tied off and zipped away loudly from his hands, according to Vatican News.

Nine-year-old Oscar gave the pope a music box shaped like a carousel together with an envelope, which, the boy said, contained 5 euros "so you can buy an ice cream."

"An ice cream?" the pope said and laughed.

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The pope encouraged the amusement park workers, who, they said, often feel marginalized. The pope thanked them "because you make people smile," which is not easy at a time when there are wars, crises and social problems.

"Thanks to all of you for this beautiful welcome. Thank you, children," he said. "I am happy to see this joy. Keep going, always with joy."

The purpose of the visit, Vatican News reported, was for the blessing of a large plaster statue of Mary that was newly installed inside the amusement park.
The pope had visited the same park in 2015 before celebrating Mass in a nearby parish in Ostia.