

Education

Materials set from USCC

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Materials in English and Spanish are available from the U.S. Catholic Conference to promote 1995's Catechetical Sunday on Sept. 17.

The theme of this year's observance is "Imagine God's Mercy."

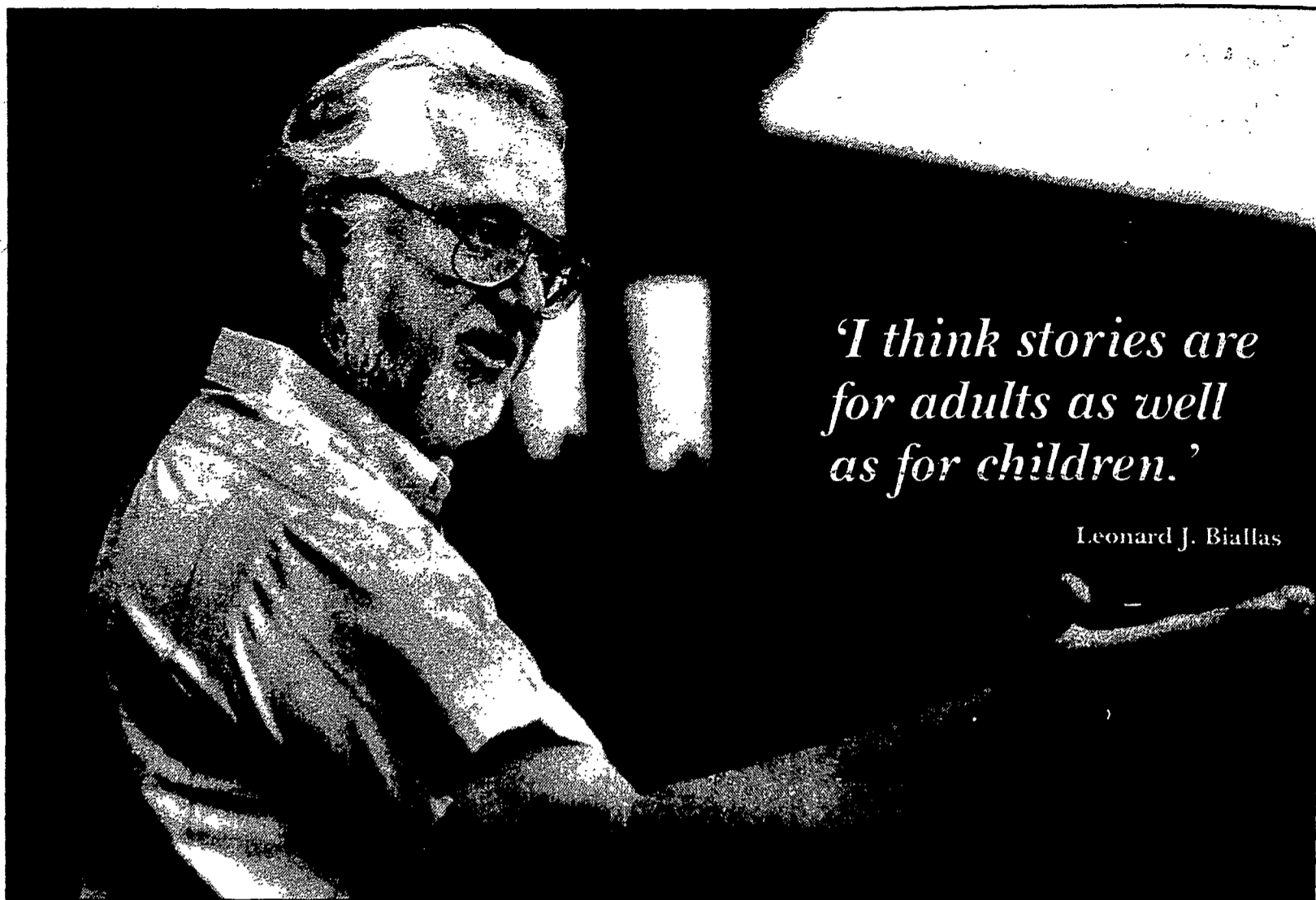
"It is not enough for the catechist to talk about God's mercy; the catechist must image that mercy, exemplify that love for those being taught," said Bishop Robert J. Banks of Green Bay, Wis., chairman of the USCC Committee on Education, in an introduction to a booklet of promotional materials.

"The Gospel tells the stories, but catechists must make them real in the way they interact with their students, especially with the younger ones or with those older ones who come wounded by life or even by their experiences within the church," he added.

The booklet includes ideas for prayer services and a rite for blessing of catechists, a prayer for catechists, homily ideas and bulletin announcements for Catechetical Sunday, bulletin art, and suggestions for a retreat for catechists.

It also features articles on various catechetical themes and ideas for including various groups in the celebrations, such as African-Americans, Vietnamese, Native Americans, the disabled, migrant farmworkers and adolescents.

EDITORS' NOTE: *The English/Spanish Catechetical Sunday kit (publication No. 036-2) is available for \$8.95 by calling the USCC Publishing Services at 1-800-235-8722. Certificates (No. 092-3 in English, 093-1 in Spanish) cost 50 cents each, and prayer cards (No. 090-7 in English and 091-5 in Spanish) are 50 for \$5.*



'I think stories are for adults as well as for children.'

Leonard J. Biallas

Leonard J. Biallas, professor of religious studies at the University of Quincy in Illinois, led a class on 'Storytelling and Spiritual Wholeness' during the 'Crossroads' program sponsored by the Colgate Rochester Divinity School and St. Bernard's Institute.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Professor: Stories explore heart of faith

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — When inquirers asked Jesus questions concerning faith, they were more likely to get a story before a theological explanation.

Such parables as the "The Prodigal Son" and "The Good Samaritan" have become part of Western culture — as have stories about Jesus' birth and death, His miracles, the conver-

sion of Paul, as well as tales from the Old Testament.

Christianity was born in stories, argues Leonard J. Biallas, who believes that returning to those narratives is a way to cut to the center of the Christian faith through the layers of theology and philosophy that have developed over the centuries.

"What I think has happened is we've lost contact with the content of faith because it's (now) based on philosophies

that are centuries old," noted Biallas, a professor of religious studies at the University of Quincy in Illinois. "What I'm trying to do is leap back."

Biallas traveled to Rochester in early June to lead a course on "Storytelling and Spiritual Wholeness" for the "Crossroads" program sponsored by Colgate Rochester Divinity School and St. Bernard's Institute.

During the course intended for religious educators Biallas explored how stories can help people reflect on their own religious tradition. As part of his course, he used material from his own books, including *World Religions: A Story Approach*, and *Myths: gods, heroes, and saviors*.

In a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*, he explained that stories are meant for all ages.

"We think stories are something for children," Biallas said. "I think stories are for adults as well as for children."

These stories, he contends, allow room for exploring truth beyond the rational, stimulating reflections on such areas as "compassion, humanness, social justice."

Biallas likened the effects of hearing a familiar story to that of listening to a song one loved 15 or 20 years ago.

"You remember what you were feeling at the time you (first) heard it, what you were doing at the time," he said. "It's the same with stories."

Moreover, stories allow us to explore ourselves, he observed. "Take Moses," he said. "Here's a man who out of curiosity looks at a burning bush and finds himself in a situation he doesn't want to be in. He killed a man (in Egypt), and he was being called to go back.

"When I hear that story," he

continued, "and I hear the excuses he gives — 'I don't know your name.' 'I stutter.' — and I look at my own life, it gives me the idea that I'm being called to something other than what I want to do."

Likewise, Jesus' story and the three temptations he faced at the devil's hands can touch people's lives.

"We've got these temptations in our lives," Biallas said of the enticements Jesus faced. He added that the story of Jesus' temptations can be seen as "a recognition of adult responsibility, and acceptance of adult responsibility."

Another story that has added meaning for people today is the one in which Moses asks to see God's face, only to be allowed to see back.

This story, Biallas said, teaches that "I can be closer to God, but I can't be so bold as to ask to see the face of God. I realize I can do an awful lot, but I'm going to experience disappointment in my life."

Religious educators can make use of such stories in a variety of ways, he noted.

One tactic he suggested is, "You tell the story, and ask how it affects the students in their own lives."

He cited as an example the story of King David looking back at his life as he's dying.

"I've asked students, 'If you were lying on your death bed, what would you have done differently in your life?'"

But as part of exploring the story, Biallas continued, teachers should have students read about King David's earlier life to understand his feelings as he faces his death.

In the same way, Biallas said, homilists need to find ways to relate the gospel stories to people.

Continued on page 8A

Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES Adult & Continuing Education

Partners with business and industry,
training workers for jobs in demand

Only 14 of the 50 fastest growing jobs
in the Finger Lakes region require a
Bachelor's degree or more.

Choose from:
Job Training Courses:

- Computer Applications for Professionals
- Electronics
- Certified Nurse Assisting
- Dental Assisting
- Modern Office Technology
- Information Processing w/Medical Billing
- Heating, Ventilating & Air conditioning
- Medical Billing Specialist
- Commercial Drivers License
- Manufacturing Technology

Also:

- Career Assessment and Counseling
- Worksite Training
- GED Preparation, ESL Classes
- Workplace Literacy Program
- Evening Adult Education Classes

Job Placement Assistance!
Call now for information
352-2721