

# Diocesan women prepare for April 19 Catholic Women's Conference in Boston

By KENNETH J. SOUZA  
ANCHOR STAFF

FALL RIVER — Women from throughout the Diocese of Fall River will be heading to Boston on April 19 for the fourth annual Boston Catholic Women's Conference

at Boston College.

The theme of this year's conference, which is preceded by a men's program on April 18, is "Trust in the Lord With All Your Heart" and key speakers for the day-long event will include Sister Nancy Kellar,

S.C., founding member of the St. Elizabeth Seton House of Prayer in Scarsdale, N.Y.; Johnnette Benkovic, founder of the Women of Grace Catholic Apostolate; Dr. Mary Healey, author of "Men and

Turn to page 12

---

## Diocesan women prepare for conference

*continued from page one*

Women Are From Eden: A Study Guide to John Paul II's "Theology of the Body"; and Kerri Caviezel, wife of actor Jim Caviezel, who played Jesus Christ in Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ." Jim, who is slated to speak during the men's conference on April 18, will also join his wife during the Sunday session.

The annual gathering, which began a year after the Boston Catholic Men's Conference in 2006, was organized by a number of Boston-area Catholic women who were active in women's or family ministries and saw an opportunity to build on the success of the men's conference. That first convocation drew an estimated 3,300 Catholic women and interest has steadily increased since.

"Last year we went up with a bunch of women from Holy Name Parish and we also had some women on the bus from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Seekonk, and St. Julie Billiart in Dartmouth, as well as other scattered parishes throughout the Fall River area," said Barbara Wenc, a parishioner at Holy Name Parish in Fall River. "We had a full bus last year and hope to have a full bus again this year."

Like the men's conference, the second-day women's event will feature the aforementioned speakers along with an opportunity for those present to socialize with other participants, receive the sacrament of penance, participate in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and celebrate a closing Mass with Cardinal Sean O'Malley. There will be special presentations on the Divine Mercy, since April 19 is Divine Mercy Sunday.

Wenc, who has attended all of the previous conferences, expressed excitement over this year's program being a full-day event. Both the first and third year of the women's conference were only held in the evening, she explained, and this year they are returning to a full-day format like what was done in 2007. Last year the conference was held on Friday evening so as not to interfere with the papal Mass at Yankee Stadium.

"It's something we're all looking forward to," Wenc said. "In 2007 we had Immaculee Ilibagiza,

who offered a powerful witness about her ordeal in Rwanda and how she survived it through prayer. Talks like that give you inspiration to know that your prayers are being heard and they're always answered — maybe not in the way that we want them to be — but they're always answered."

"Immaculee was amazing," agreed Maureen Brawley, a parishioner at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Seekonk. "That was a presentation that really stood out to me. I think all the speakers bring a great message and each speaker can touch a person in a different way. I think each speaker will touch each person if they're open to the message and reconnecting with others is what's really important in life."

Brawley is very enthusiastic about the fact that the women's conference will encompass a full-day agenda again this year.

"Last year was just Friday evening, so I'm glad it's a whole day," she said. "It's really hard to cram it all into one night. The whole thing is about taking the time to connect with other Catholic women from all over the diocese, so going back to a full day really makes sense."

Brawley said the conference theme of "Trust in the Lord With All Your Heart" is particularly appropriate this year given the difficult economic situation many families are now in.

"To me, it means give all your worries to God, because he will take care of what's important and right now that's what everyone needs to keep in mind," Brawley said. "Not that finances aren't important, but in the end you can't take it with you and we're not on this earth to please anyone other than God."

Brawley and Wenc expressed their joy at being able to attend this annual get-together each year and they strongly urged other Catholic women in the diocese to join them.

"When you see that many people gathered together in their life of faith, it's an inspiration for you to go forward with your own," Wenc said. "It's definitely a worthwhile day and I would encourage everyone to attend."

*For more information about the conference, visit [www.catholicboston.com](http://www.catholicboston.com).*

*The Anchor  
Diocese of Fall River  
March 20, 2009*