

**Boston City Paper March 11, 2006**  
**8,500 GATHER IN SOUTH BOSTON**  
**LARGEST CATHOLIC MEN'S CONFERENCE IN THE COUNTRY**

By Chris Harding

There was no multiplication of loaves and fishes, but 5000 present-day men were fed intellectually and spiritually at the Second Annual Boston Catholic Men's Conference (BCMC) held Saturday March 4, 2006 at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center. Adding to the laymen the 200 priests who heard confessions and distributed communion at the concluding Mass celebrated by Cardinal-designate Sean O'Malley, the BCMC has suddenly surged ahead become the best-attended of all the 40-odd Catholic men's conferences in the country.

Participants raved about their experiences.

"The speakers: best line-up I could ever imagine short of the Pope!"

"5200 men together celebrating our Faith!! What an amazing set of speakers. I went to confession for the first time in 30 years."

"5200 men singing the common parts of Mass together - that was really powerful."!

Also commenting on the gratifying growth of the BCMC, Scot Landry, a member of the Cambridge-based men's group that organizes the event, notes, "Given all that the Boston Archdiocese has been through in the past five years, for the Boston Catholic Men's Conference to emerge as the nation's biggest men's conference and its sister event, the Boston Catholic Women's Conference, to emerge as the largest women's conference is definitely a sign of hope."

The huge crowd (more than double last year's turnout at BC High's McNeice Pavilion) necessitated the use of two giant 16 x 20 video projection screens and a quarter-of-a-million dollar sound system so that men from all over New England could clearly hear the moving inside-the-Vatican revelations, the deep spiritual truths, and the guy-humor wisecracks from three of the world's top preachers along with insights from youth ministers and men's group organizers.

The program allowed the audience to hear once in the morning and once in the afternoon from a line-up that included a famous convert, a famous revert, and Italy's best-known homilist, each with a distinct preaching style.

Gentlest and most politically correct, Fr. Rainero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., Preacher to the Papal Household, warmly welcomed non-Catholic brothers in the audience before launching into the kind of sermon that he typically delivers before the Holy Father and the cardinals. Ex-Presbyterian minister and Bible scholar Dr. Scott Hahn impressed equally with the scope of his knowledge of Scripture and the candor of his public confession of personal failings. His description of the correlation between the structure of the Book of Revelation and the structure of the Mass was particularly illuminating.

With his demeanor of a drill sergeant with an ever so slight twinkle in his eye, former black sheep Fr. John Corapi, SOLT spared no military metaphors in wowing his rapt army of listeners. Fr. Corapi thundered warnings that a WWF superstar would blush to utter, warnings like "Satan wants your children dead ...in a garbage can!" and the men just ate it all up.

Recording artist Sean Forrest and Brothers Patrick O'Reilly and Sam Gunn of Somerville's Brotherhood of Hope used stark statistics and contemporary music to reach the younger men while Steve Bollman, founder of Paradisus Dei, encouraged their dads to form parish men's groups.

During presentation breaks men flocked to exhibitors ranging from conference sponsors the Knights of Columbus and Legatus, the preeminent organization of Catholic business leaders, to Jesuit Prison Ministries and the Worcester Catholic Men's Conference (April 1, 2006 featuring EWTN's Fr. Benedict Groeschel).

The "Band of Brothers in Christ" Second Annual BCMC was the fruit of a year of diligent prayer, sacrifice, networking, and grunt work of over 130 parishes captains and the Organizing Team that includes a hedge fund money manager, two software executives and a former Swiss Guard. Thanks to their impetus 8500 Catholics gathered in South Boston to hear the kind of solid unvarnished doctrine that they may not be getting in their home parishes, and so for a few glorious hours they turned an impersonal, high-ceilinged convention center into a massive cathedral.