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From March 10, 2006 Edition of The Pilot

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Something is moving

The resounding success of The Catholic Men's and Women's Conferences held March 3-4 in South Boston speaks volumes of the desire of Boston Catholics to move beyond the crisis we have endured and seek new spiritual strength to continue our journey in life.

The first Catholic Women's Conference — put together in barely four weeks — was able to gather 3,300 women, and the men's conference, with 5,200 in attendance, nearly tripled attendance over last year.

These events defy the public perception of a Church divided between an anachronistic hierarchy obsessed with keeping their repressive grip on a submissive flock and the awakening of a new generation of free-thinking Catholics who routinely question Church teachings.

Instead, bishops, priests and laity — each with their own particular vocation — gathered together, united, with the same spirit, and at ease with one another. They were affirming their faith and enriching themselves with inspiring talks focused on the central aspects of Christianity. Many speakers touched on the need to grow in faith every day, rejecting temptation and striving to understand and to embrace the will of God in one's life.

Something is moving in this archdiocese. As much as troublesome stories about the Church fill the daily news, other stories are taking place, many at the parish level in which regular Catholics are trying to deepen their faith, renew their baptismal promises and know more about their Catholic traditions.

Whether it be the men's and women's conferences, Cursillo, Renew, Generations of Faith, the Focolarini, Neocatechumenal Way, Communion and Liberation or any of the other programs and groups active throughout the archdiocese, they all work toward a common goal: a spiritual renewal of Boston Catholics.

Let us not be misunderstood. Bad news must not be swept under the rug. It often provides us with an accurate picture of our weaknesses and failures. But as important as that is, we also need to encourage spiritual renewal. Only through such renewal will the Church be able to challenge the secular culture and give witness of the plan of God for the world: one of love and life.

These conferences have been organized by a small group of young, energetic and brilliant lay Catholics — men and women — who are trying to inspire others to experience what they have experienced: the transforming grace of a personal experience with the risen Lord. Their inspiration is bringing a much-needed breath of fresh air and great fruits of conversion and Christian life to this archdiocese.

Good event, bad choice

Boston College's Church in the 21st Century Center recently sponsored a lively panel discussion about Catholics and public life. The forum, hosted by NBC's Tim Russert, attracted 6,000 people Feb. 27.

Even though remarks touched upon a variety of social and moral issues, the discussion gravitated around the subject of abortion rights and the dramatic effect that Roe vs. Wade has had among Catholics.

The panelists generally agreed that for more than 30 years Catholics have found themselves torn between their traditional loyalty to the Democratic party and their increasing reluctance to accept abortion. Sen. John F. Kerry's failure to obtain the support of the majority of Catholic voters was mentioned as a confirmation of the gradual shift among Catholics towards a more informed vote.

However, tarnishing the other-wise edifying event were the remarks by CNN political analyst Jim Carville. His rudeness and his derogatory remarks about the teachings of the Church and the character of its leadership were not only false, but baseless and sometimes irrational. He seemed more interested in seeking easy laughs and garnering audience applause than joining the other panelists in

rationaly discussing the issues.

His presence, although un-doubtedly enjoyed by many in the audience, diminished the level of the discussion in an otherwise fine event.



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