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New Orleans bids adieu to legendary archbishop

Bruce Nolan The Times Picayune | Oct. 7, 2011

NEW ORLEANS -- Thousands of mourners paid their final respects Thursday (Oct. 6) to legendary Archbishop Philip M. Hannan as his casket was slowly lowered beneath the sanctuary of St. Louis Cathedral to rest near eight predecessors.

?We thank God this day for Philip M. Hannan,? current Archbishop Gregory Aymond said after a two-hour, 15-minute funeral. ?He whispered to God daily his hopes and his dreams. Then he spoke boldly for the respect of life of the unborn, the dying, the poor and those with disabilities.?

Hannan, 98, died Sept 29, 46 years to the day after his appointment to New Orleans, which he permanently embraced as his adopted city. The native Washingtonian also kept close ties as confidant to the extended Kennedy family.

At the end of the funeral Mass, an honor guard of paratroopers from Hannan?s old World War II outfit, the 82nd Airborne, marched to the head of the center aisle and tipped its regimental flags in tribute.

A trumpeter blew taps from the balcony for the former chaplain who ministered to GIs in the Belgian snow during the Battle of the Bulge.

Some 200 priests and deacons, nearly 20 bishops and a host of local political leaders and clergy turned out to pay their last respects. An overflow crowd stood in Jackson Square to watch the service on a large TV screen.

Twice during the service, Hannan?s own words were read by others. ?From my perspective as a priest, I will accomplish in death what I could not in life,? Hannan wrote in a meditation read by Aymond. ?Because as priests we are most fully alive when we die.?

[Bruce Nolan writes for *The Times-Picayune* in New Orleans.]

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