

# Archbishop Hannan, 98, laid foundation for Baltimore CYO, counseled Kennedy

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Retired Archbishop Philip M. Hannan of New Orleans, a World War II paratroop chaplain, counselor to President John F. Kennedy, and staunch defender of civil rights and the unborn who began his ministry in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, died Sept. 29 at age 98.

Archbishop Hannan studied for the priesthood at St. Charles College in Catonsville and the Sulpician Seminary in Washington, receiving a master's degree from The Catholic University of America before going in 1936 to the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

After his Dec. 8, 1939 ordination in Rome, the future archbishop celebrated his first Mass in the United States June 16, 1940.

As a newly ordained priest, Archbishop Hannan served two years as an assistant pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas in Hampden. He started an active youth ministry at the church, spearheading the renovation of an old school building to host dances and other events for area parishes.

The young priest organized an inter-parish moonlight cruise for young people – using his own money as a down payment on the boat. The event was the first of many activities of what would become the Council of Catholic Social Clubs, later to be renamed the Catholic Youth Organization. Father Hannan headed the group until he entered the armed services in 1942.

In a 1992 interview with The Catholic Review a few days before the archdiocese celebrated the 50th anniversary of Archbishop Hannan's historic youth cruise, the

archbishop said young people were a priority because he knew they needed a place to gather and grow into responsible, faith-filled adults. He recalled that one of his techniques for attracting crowds was picking the “prettiest girls” to be members of the welcoming committee.

“That way,” he said, “we didn’t have to worry about boys coming. It’s a law of nature.”

Archbishop Hannan said the dances were opportunities for catechesis. He would field questions from young people regarding the doctrines of the church, he said.

Mark Pacione, former director of the archdiocese’s Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, said Archbishop Hannan was a pioneering figure in youth ministry.

“He thought in ways that we take for granted now,” said Pacione, noting that the cruise was the first youth event in the archdiocese to involve multiple parishes.

In 1942 Archbishop Hannan volunteered as a wartime paratroop chaplain and served with the 505th Parachute Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division. In 1945, as the horrors of Nazi prisoner-of-war camps became widely known, Chaplain Hannan liberated a German camp of emaciated prisoners at Wöbbelin.

After the war, Father Hannan was assistant pastor at St. Mary’s Church in Washington. In 1948 he was appointed vice chancellor of the newly established Archdiocese of Washington. In 1951 he helped organize the Catholic Standard, the archdiocesan newspaper, and was its editor-in-chief for the next 14 years. He was ordained auxiliary bishop of Washington in 1956.

In his 2010 memoir, “The Archbishop Wore Combat Boots,” Archbishop Hannan discussed his confidential counseling role to President Kennedy. Jacqueline Kennedy asked Archbishop Hannan to deliver the eulogy at the assassinated president’s funeral Mass Nov. 25, 1963, at St. Matthew Cathedral in Washington.

Archbishop Hannan later gave the graveside eulogy at the funeral of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and offered graveside prayers at the interment of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

Pope Paul VI appointed Archbishop Hannan as the 11th archbishop of New Orleans Sept. 29, 1965 – just 20 days after Hurricane Betsy struck New Orleans. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005 – at age 92 – he stayed at the studios of Focus Wordwide, an offshoot of the television network he created in the 1980s, to protect it from looters.

“Archbishop Hannan in every way was a good shepherd of the church who was modeled after Christ, not just for Catholics of New Orleans but for the whole community,” Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans said in a statement.

Archbishop Aymond was to celebrate a funeral Mass for Archbishop Hannan Oct. 6.

Archbishop Hannan was the third-oldest U.S. bishop and one of the two last surviving U.S. bishops to have attended all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) as a bishop.

*Catholic News Service contributed to this story. Visit [www.tinyurl.com/cr-hannanbalt](http://www.tinyurl.com/cr-hannanbalt) for more on Archbishop Hannan's years in Baltimore.*