

## New York Cathedral Celebrates 50 Year Commitment Of A Gay Couple

For Immediate Release

NEW YORK/EWORLDWIRE/Oct. 14, 2005 --- "The Celebration and Blessing of a 50 Year Commitment" service was held in New York's Episcopal Cathedral of Saint John the Divine on Saturday, October 8, 2005. The Very Reverend James A. Kowalski, Dean, officiated and blessed the Rev. Canon Dr. Richard T. Nolan and Robert C. Pingpank, whose life together began as Trinity College freshmen in 1955.

The ceremony was not a marriage rite, a fact which was made clear by the officiant early in the unique liturgy as he addressed the congregation. "Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of God to celebrate the 50 year covenant between Richard Thomas Nolan and Robert Charles Pingpank and to give thanks for, and reflect on, commitment in the context of their relationship," Kowalski said.

The couple then prayed aloud. "O God, the source of all love, we give thanks to you for binding us together in holy baptism and a covenant of family life for these 50 years past," said Nolan and Pingpank "And we give thanks for all who have befriended and supported us during our pilgrimage. Grant that by your Holy Spirit and by the fellowship of your Church and others, we may continue one in spirit, purpose, and commitment. Give us grace that we may live the rest of our days in fidelity and peace, loving and cherishing each other, honoring and counseling one another, and comforting each other in sickness and in health. When we are separated for a while by death, enkindle in us the Easter hope of reuniting in the Communion of Saints, in life everlasting. This we pray in the Name of Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen."

The couple's online "Scrapbook" is found at [www.nolan-pingpank.com](http://www.nolan-pingpank.com). It includes the biography "Soul Mates: More Than Partners," written mostly by a now-deceased straight, married woman.

Nolan and Pingpank, both 68 and born three days apart, are former Connecticut educators who moved to Florida in 1994. "Cradle Episcopalians," they live in suburban West Palm Beach, Fl. and are active in Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church, Lake Worth, especially in the parish's Integrity-Palm Beach chapter for gay and straight men and women.

Nolan is a "retired priest-in residence" at St. Andrew's and a chaplain to Integrity. Additionally, the couple participates in Lambda Legal and Compass of West Palm Beach, the largest gay and lesbian center in the southeast United States. Nolan remains a "retired honorary canon" of Christ Church Cathedral in Hartford, Conn.

In February, they were the first couple to sign up in the new Domestic Partners Registry of West Palm Beach.

Toward the end of the service, Nolan whispered to Pingpank, "Do you feel married?" With an affectionate smile, Pingpank replied, "I've felt married for fifty years."

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