News



Bishop Howard Hubbard swings incense during an Ash Wednesday communion service at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Feb. 25, 2004, in Albany, N.Y. The 84-year-old retired bishop of Albany, who has been accused of sexual abuse and has unsuccessfully sought to be removed from the priesthood, said Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2024, he recently married a woman in a civil ceremony. (AP Photo/Jim McKnight, File)

Michael Hill

View Author Profile

Associated Press

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Albany, N.Y. — August 2, 2023

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

An 84-year-old retired bishop of Albany, who has been accused of sexual abuse and has unsuccessfully sought to be removed from the priesthood, said August 1 he recently married a woman in a civil ceremony.

Emeritus Bishop Howard Hubbard made the surprise announcement during a tumultuous time for the Albany diocese. It filed for bankruptcy this year after a surge of lawsuits from people who say they endured sexual abuse as children, sometimes decades ago.

The current bishop of the upstate New York diocese said it did not consider Hubbard's marriage to be valid.

Hubbard, who retired in 2014, has acknowledged covering up allegations of abuse by priests, in part to avoid scandal. He has adamantly denied accusations that he abused minors.

Hubbard last fall said he wanted to be laicized, or returned to the lay state, because he could no longer function as a priest due to a U.S. church policy that bars accused priests from ministry. It also would have relieved him of his celibacy obligations.

But his request to the Vatican was rejected in March and he was encouraged to wait patiently while the seven civil lawsuits against him are resolved, Hubbard said in a prepared statement.

"I could be 91 or 92 before these legal matters are concluded," Hubbard said. "In the meantime, I have fallen in love with a wonderful woman who has helped and cared for me and who believes in me."

Advertisement

Hubbard said they were married in a civil ceremony in July.

Albany Bishop Edward Scharfenberger said rules against marriage still apply to Hubbard, even though he cannot represent himself as a priest.

"The Church does not acknowledge his marriage as valid," Scharfenberger said in a letter to the diocese. "He remains a retired Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church and therefore cannot enter into marriage."

Scharfenberger said he was still processing the "unexpected news."

The Albany diocese, like others around the state, is dealing with lawsuits dating to when New York temporarily suspended the statute of limitations to give people who say they were victims of childhood sexual abuse the ability to pursue decades-old allegations.

A representative for Hubbard declined to provide further information. Hubbard asked that reporters and others respect his privacy.

"My life on the public stage has come to an end," he said.

A version of this story appeared in the **Aug 18-31, 2023** print issue under the headline: Retired bishop in New York state gets married after bid to leave priesthood denied.