News



Retired Bishop Howard Hubbard of Albany, N.Y., is seen in this 2013 file photo. The Diocese of Albany announced Aug. 18, 2023, that Bishop Hubbard was hospitalized after suffering "a major stroke," and that he had been anointed. (OSV News/Nate Whitchurch, via Diocese of Albany)

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Albany, N.Y. — August 18, 2023

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***Editor's note**: Retired Albany, N.Y., Bishop Howard Hubbard died the afternoon of Aug. 19, the Albany Times Union has reported. NCR will publish an updated story as soon as it becomes available.*

Retired Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany has been hospitalized at Albany Medical Center after suffering a major stroke Aug. 17.

"Please pray for Bishop Howard Hubbard. I received news that he is currently hospitalized at Albany Medical Center. Our chaplains have visited him and anointed him. We do not have further detail at this time but will update you as information comes in," Albany Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger said in a statement Aug. 18.

"I urge you to offer prayer, find strength in God, and know that He walks with us. Isaiah 41:10: 'Do not fear. I am with you: do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.'"

Hubbard, who also suffered a stroke last year after he was involved in a minor car accident, had recently announced that was married in a civil ceremony after the Vatican had denied his request to be laicized.

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"Last fall, after prayerful consideration and consultation, I applied to the Vatican to be returned to the lay state and to be relieved of my clerical obligations. In March, I received notice from the Vatican that my request had been denied," Bishop Hubbard said in the statement titled, "A Letter to My Dear Colleagues and Friends," and dated Aug. 1. "I was encouraged to wait patiently and prayerfully and to continue to abstain from public ministry until seven civil lawsuits against me alleging sexual misconduct had been adjudicated."

"Shortly thereafter, the Diocese of Albany declared bankruptcy, as have six of the eight other Dioceses in New York State," he continued. "I have been advised that it may be several years before the Albany bankruptcy case is settled and all of the Child Victims Act civil lawsuits adjudicated. Presently, I am 84 years of age and will

turn 85 in October. I could be 91 or 92 before these legal matters are concluded.

"In the meantime, I have fallen in love with a wonderful woman who has helped and cared for me and who believes in me," he said. "She has been a loving and supportive companion on this journey. After much prayerful reflection, we decided to marry and did so in July in a civil ceremony."

Hubbard -- who was just 38 when he was ordained bishop of Albany in 1977, making him the youngest bishop in the United States at the time -- has been tainted by scandal in the later part of his tenure as bishop and in his retirement. Since the Child Victims Act went into effect Aug. 14, 2019, lifting the statute of limitations on abuse cases, Hubbard has been named directly in seven CVA lawsuits. Hubbard has vehemently denied he abused anyone, saying in 2019 after he was named in a second lawsuit that "I have never sexually abused anyone of any age at any time."

The crush of the more than 400 lawsuits eventually led the Diocese of Albany to file for Chapter 11 reorganization March 15, 2023.

In March 2022, as first reported in the Times Union daily newspaper, in deposition testimony from 2021 that was made public that month, Bishop Hubbard was questioned by an attorney representing people who had filed claims of abuse against the Diocese of Albany under the CVA.

Asked why he did not report a suspected case of child sexual abuse to law enforcement when he was bishop after a priest allegedly admitted to him that he had abused a child, Hubbard replied, "Because I was not a mandated reporter. I don't think the law then or even now requires me to do it. Would I do it now? Yes. But did I do it then? No."