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Albany Bishop Refutes Allegations

Bishop Howard Hubbard Says He Has Been "Faithful to My Vow of Celibacy"

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ALBANY -- Bishop Howard Hubbard on Thursday denied he ever had a homosexual relationship during the 1970s with a man who committed suicide.

Reiterating his desire to take a polygraph to prove he is telling the truth, Hubbard said he has been "faithful to my vow of celibacy."

Hubbard's comments come one day after the alleged victim's brother made the accusations at a press conference arranged by his attorney, John Aretakis. Aretakis represents several people who claim they were sexually abused decades ago by priests of the Albany Roman Catholic Diocese.

Church officials asked Albany County District Attorney Paul Clyne to investigate the allegations and Clyne said he would.

On Wednesday, Aretakis made public what he said was Zalay's suicide note, calling it "a smoking gun," that described an affair with Hubbard. Zalay died April 19, 1978, after setting himself afire in his second-floor bedroom of his family's home at 905 Myrtle Ave. He was 25.

Zalay's brother, Andrew, a 56-year-old electrical engineer from Laguna Niguel, Calif., told reporters he found the typed, unsigned note and another, hand-written suicide note in August while packing the belongings of his mother, Ethel, who had suffered a stroke and was in a nursing home. She died in December. The notes were among pictures and other records of his brother's life in a dresser drawer, he said.

The typed note reads, in part: "The relations with Howard are both spiritual, intellectual and of assistance to my self confidence. But at the same time the relationship is decadent and sinful. Howard explains that his role as bishop and his vows of celibacy are not involved because the Bible describes celibacy as being free of women. I do not and have not considered myself a homosexual, but maintaining this relationship serves spiritual purposes."

The note continued: "As bishop, I think he has unfairly used his position in the church to get what he wants from me. Although I know all of this is wrong, his kindness seems to overshadow the sexual acts I am compelled to endure. ... This lifestyle is not for me and I need to get out. I do believe the only way to get out is to take my own life."

The hand-written note, which is signed "good night, Tom," does not mention Hubbard but makes reference to "problems I have, such as homicidal thoughts, incestuous desires and child molesting. I am a dangerous monster."

Thomas Zalay had been an altar boy at St. Vincent de Paul Church on Madison Avenue. He attended Northeastern University and worked as a computer technician for the General Electric Co. in Pittsfield, Mass.

Hubbard became bishop on March 27, 1977, at age 38.

Zalay said he was away at college at the time of his brother's death. He said his parents told him

about his younger brother's suicide in 1978, but never told him about the suicide notes. His father, also named Andrew, died in 1999.

"I wasn't sure what to do with this note when I found it," said Zalay. He said contacted Aretakis after learning of the attorney's representation of victims of clergy sex abuse. Zalay said he decided to make the letter public "so what happened to my brother doesn't have to happen to anyone else."

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