



The Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, right, presiding bishop for the Episcopal Church in the U.S., talks with St. Alban's pastor the Rev. Billie Abraham, left and the Rev. Margaret Ayers of Shreveport.

Episcopal Church leaders come together to honor Bishop Marble



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Chip Marble came home Monday.

In a small service at St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Bovina officiated by the Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, presiding bishop for the Episcopal Church in the U.S., Bishop Alfred Clark "Chip" Marble's ashes were buried by his parents and sister in the church cemetery as family and friends looked on.

Marble served as bishop of Mississippi, and after his retirement was assistant bishop to the bishop of North Carolina.

"He was my bishop, but he was also my mentor, and he could not have been more pastoral to me and my family," said the Rt. Rev. Brian R. Seage, Episcopal bishop of Mississippi who assisted at the service. He said Marble was bishop when he was ordained a deacon and later as a priest.

“One of the things I’ll always remember, when my eldest child was born — and it was a real difficult pregnancy and she very premature — Bishop Marble drove down to Mobile, (Ala.) where she was born to make sure we were OK.”



He said Marble was a gentle man, adding, “When you were in his presence, you knew that he was focusing on you.”

Marble’s brother, Dan, recalled when Marble served as caretaker at St. Alban’s while in high school.

“Me and my twin brother, we would help him cut the yard, and do all the inside stuff, like the sweeping and the dusting, and the waxing, you name it. We did that for years.”

([http://www.vicksburgpost.com/wp-](http://www.vicksburgpost.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/BishopAlfredMarble.jpg)

[content/uploads/2017/04/BishopAlfredMarble.jpg](http://www.vicksburgpost.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/BishopAlfredMarble.jpg), Marble, he said, was commissioned a Navy ensign through Naval ROTC at Ole Miss, and entered the seminary after leaving the Navy.

Marble

When he was ordained bishop of Mississippi, Dan Marble said, “We were extremely proud of him. They had big ordination in Jackson; it was a huge affair.”

“He was assisting the bishop in North Carolina, when he was called to be the bishop in Mississippi. Somebody from Mississippi nominated him. Someone in one of his congregations nominated him for bishop and he went through that process and was elected bishop of Mississippi.

“After he retired his position as bishop in Mississippi, the bishop in North Carolina called him and asked him to come to North Carolina. He said, ‘This territory is too large for me to cover by myself;’ so he asked him if he would come up there to be his assistant.”

“It is with sadness and joy that we come to commend our brother, Chip, to the eternal care of a loving and almighty God,” Curry said in his homily.

“The power of love could be found in this man named Chip. St. Paul said love is even more powerful than the even the titanic power of death itself. Where there is love, death does not have a victory,” he said.

“Anybody who knew Chip considered him the body and the power of love. He wasn’t perfect, but at the end of the day, when the roll was called up yonder, he embodied the power of love that could forgive and be forgiven, that could give. It was hard for people to dislike him consistently.”

Marble, Curry said, loved his family, and talked about them. He loved his church, his diocese and Mississippi, “his state.”

Marble, Curry said, would speak for those who had no voice.

“He would speak for lesbians and gays and bisexual folks, he would speak on behalf of the disabled. Those who didn’t have a voice, Chip would be their voice. He wasn’t always right, but he spoke up anyway. He loved us so much. He worked to help us to become better.”

Curry talked about a letter Marble's wife sent him about his final days, adding the letter said his last words were "There is joy in everything."

Chip, you are correct, your family friends are all been blessed, we've that joy," Curry said.

The sentence led to the congregation in the church, led by Curry, singing the gospel song, "I've Got the Joy In My Heart."

"Good night, sweet friend, and may flights of angels now bring you to thy rest," he added after the song.

After the service, Curry said Marble "had a way of making things better and calling out the best in all of us, because whether you agreed or disagreed with Chip Marble, you just loved him, because he loved you and you knew it, and so as a result, things got done."

After Marble moved to Greensboro, N.C., Curry said, he was responsible for starting an ecumenical interfaith religious council in Greensboro that brought together various Christian traditions, but also with people of other religious traditions.

"That group still continues and will have a service for him as a way of honoring him," he said. "He started the truth and reconciliation commission in Greensboro that really had helped.

Marble, 81, was born in Oneonta, N. Y., April 4, 1936, to Alfred Clark Marble and Charlotte Elizabeth Humbarger Marble. The family moved to Vicksburg when he was 3, and from then on, Mississippi was considered home.

He was ordained in 1967, and served as curate at St. James Episcopal in Jackson before serving as vicar of missions in Olive Branch and Southaven. He moved to Oxford, where he served at the Episcopal Church of the Nativity in Water Valley and was the Episcopal chaplain at Ole Miss.

Marble became rector of the Church of the Mediator in Meridian, and was later called to be the assistant to the Bishop in the Diocese of East Carolina.

In 1993, he was consecrated the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Mississippi after serving two years as bishop coadjutor.

While he was bishop in Mississippi, Marble supported building a strong diaconal, or deacon, ministry, and in 2013, the name of the diaconal training program was changed to The A.C. Marble School for Theological Formation.

The school operates through the Gray Center in Madison County and in coordination with the Iona Initiative of the Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas. It continues to train new generations of vocational deacons and, more recently, transitional deacons, for ministry in the Diocese of Mississippi.

Marble retired as bishop in Mississippi in 2003 and subsequently served as an assisting bishop in the Diocese of North Carolina.

Marble is survived by his wife, Diene Harper; his sons, Matt and Jonathan (Laura) Marble; his sister, Tanis (Archie) McKay; brothers, Dan (Bobbye), Richard (Carol Ann) and Everett (Frances); nieces and nephews, including Charlotte, Margaret, Beth and Emily; as well as his brother-in-law Lee Harper (Tammy).

He is preceded in death by his parents and his sister, Shirley M. Bruno and her husband Nick.

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