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Bishop Robert W. McElroy of San Diego is pictured after an interview with Catholic News Serv

Bishop Robert W. McElroy of San Diego is pictured after an interview with Catholic News Service in Rome Oct. 27, 2019. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



by Catholic News Service

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San Diego Bishop Robert W. McElroy was admitted to the hospital to undergo a coronary bypass operation Nov. 22, and he is expected to make a full recovery, according to a diocesan news release.

The diocese said the bishop was not an emergency patient because it was a planned procedure.

In a letter to the priests of the diocese, Bishop McElroy explained that he and his doctors began discussing possible surgery following test results he received over the summer. He anticipated returning to work after the Christmas holidays.

"I have great confidence in the medical staff who are carrying out this operation and, generally patients are able to return to work in about four weeks," said Bishop McElroy in his letter to priests. "Of course, God will be in charge of all this."

A native of San Francisco, Bishop McElroy is the sixth bishop of San Diego. He was installed April 15, 2015. Ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of San Francisco April 12, 1980, he was an auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese from September 2010 until

he was named to head the Diocese of San Diego in 2015.

He is a member of two U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' subcommittees, on the Church in Latin America and on the Church in Africa.

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A week before his surgery, he attended the first in-person fall general assembly the USCCB had had since 2019 due to COVID-19. The bishops met Nov. 15-18 in Baltimore.

Among their actions at the meeting was a vote to approve a 26-page statement on the Eucharist titled "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church," which "addresses the fundamental doctrine about the Eucharist that the church needs to retrieve and revive" and "endeavors to explain the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the church."

In May in an essay published in America magazine, Bishop McElroy had urged such a document not be used to target Catholic politicians who support abortion and urge they be denied Communion, as some speculated would be the aim of such a statement.

"The Eucharist must never be instrumentalized for a political end, no matter how important. ... This must not happen," he wrote.

At the bishops virtual spring assembly gathering in June, the bishops heavily debated whether the document would address this issue, but in debate on the document ahead of the vote to approve it Nov. 17 the issue of denying Communion to these Catholic politicians was not raised in the discussion.