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Washington Cardinal Robert McElroy gives the homily at the Red Mass at the Cathedral of St.

Washington Cardinal Robert McElroy gives the homily at the Red Mass at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in Washington Oct. 5. (OSV News/Christopher Newkumet, John Carroll Society)

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Cardinal Robert McElroy of Washington has announced he is "cancer free," following surgery Nov. 13 for a rare but non-aggressive cancer.

"This week I received word from my doctor that my pathology report had come back, and it stated that the surgery had removed all of the cancerous tissue in my body," said the cardinal in a statement posted online Dec. 5 by the Catholic Standard, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington. "I am cancer free and will not have to undergo any further treatments."

On Nov. 5, the archdiocese had reported the 71-year-old cardinal had been diagnosed with "well-differentiated liposarcoma, which is a non-aggressive cancer that tends not to metastasize."

According to the Cleveland Clinic, the term "liposarcoma" covers a group of "very rare cancers that begin in your fat cells," typically originating in the arms, legs and midsection.

Some 1 in 100,000 in the U.S. are affected each year by liposarcoma, which is usually found in men more than women, particularly men between the ages of 50 and 65.

The Cleveland Clinic notes on its website that "well-differentiated liposarcoma" — the cells of which appear more like normal cells when examined under a microscope — along with "atypical lipoma of the extremities (arms and legs), grow slowly and aren't life-threatening."

Given that, said the archdiocese in its November statement, "the Cardinal's doctors are in consensus that his prognosis is very good."

The cardinal had spoken with the archdiocese's priests on Nov. 4 about his condition, telling them, "I am at peace with this challenge and hope and believe that in God's grace I will be Archbishop of Washington for many years to come."

Now, said the cardinal in his latest statement, that belief has been affirmed, thanks to God's grace and the prayers of many.

"I give thanks to God who has sustained me through this journey," he said. "And I give thanks to all of you who have prayed to God for my healing. I believe those prayers were what led to this wonderful outcome."

He added, "May the Lord bless you deeply during this joyous season of Advent."

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