



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST Catholic Church & School

October 11, 2020

Dear Parishioners:

Upon reaching a certain age and becoming eligible for Medicare, one quickly learns about the annual Medicare Wellness Visit. The patient completes a preliminary questionnaire and reports to his/her primary care physician for a general check-up: height, weight, blood pressure, pulse rate, listening to heart and lungs, etc. The visit provides the patient an opportunity to report any new aches/pains/concerns to one's doctor. My Medicare Wellness Visit general occurs in the Fall.

I discovered some twenty years ago a little lump on my right shoulder blade. Some sort of growth. It had never bothered me, and because it was on my back I couldn't see it and so didn't have cause to think about it very often over those years. But this past Summer, it started to feel a little raw and sensitive when I towed off after a shower or rubbed my back against the sofa or used my back-scratcher to attack an itch. So, I made a point of calling it to my primary care physician's attention during my Wellness Visit a couple of weeks ago.

He called it a "subcutaneous cyst" and referred me to one of the system's surgeons to have it removed, advising me that the surgeon would determine whether the procedure could be done in his office or if it would have to be scheduled for the hospital.

My appointment with the surgeon was last Monday. After examining my back, he said that, if I had the time, he could remove the cyst during that very same visit. I was fine with his proposal, so he described the procedure – local anesthetic, removal of the cyst, suture with melting sutures, biopsy of the cyst and report the results back to me by the end of the week – and had his nurse ready the equipment.

Then he had me lie belly-down on the table, swabbed the area clean, applied the anesthetic, and went to work. I could feel him as he cut and pulled – no pain, but I could feel it. The biggest surprise came when shortly into the procedure he observed in a somewhat surprised tone voice: "You've got thick skin." I didn't know there was such a thing; I thought it was just a figure of speech. Feeling that, since he had addressed his comment to me, I should say something to acknowledge his words, but being clueless about what a proper medico-physiological response might be, I replied: "It comes in handy sometimes."

And that's the truth!

Fr. Phil