

## NOVEMBER 14 BISHOP ROBERT KASUN

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Just yesterday, I was riding the Toronto subway system. Now, there is nothing particularly earth-shattering about riding the subway system. But this particular evening was a little different. On most days, I ride the subway because I can get to or from work a whole lot faster than if I am driving in the car.

Yesterday, it was just after six pm when I arrived at the subway station. The first train came along, and I could see immediately that I would not be able to get on the train. Why not? Well, it was packed, much like the proverbial sardines in a sardine can. When the doors opened to the train, I could see that there wasn't a square inch for anyone even to think about getting on. So, I and many others let the train go past.

Shortly, the second train came along. When this one arrived, the doors opened, and I could see there was room, perhaps, for a couple of people to get on. Standing room only, of course. So, I pushed my way onto the train, and the doors closed immediately. I got caught in the doors, but that is another story. But as soon as the doors closed, the train started and lurched forward with a jolt. At that point, many of the people who were standing fell a little bit backward, and I did too.

I fell backward, and when I turned around, I saw that there was a woman into whom I had bumped. I said to her, "Oh, I'm sorry that I bumped into you." She smiled and said, "Oh, don't worry about it, that's normal. That's what happens on the subway train." Then she went on to express a few friendly words.

Well, I was shocked. I was stunned, in fact. Why was she expressing friendly words to me? Unknown to her, on the train. That just doesn't happen. Why was she smiling at me? That doesn't happen, either. So, I began to be a little frightened. I thought, "I think I know why she is

smiling. Because she has discovered an easy way of pick-pocketing me." However, when I eventually got off the train, I still had my wallet.

Then I thought she was smiling because she would have had a butcher knife under her coat, and she could have stabbed me because I bumped into her. That didn't happen either. But it did strike me as strange that there was a woman smiling and trying to make conversation. Rarely, if ever, does that happen unless you are known to the person standing or sitting next to you.

Others on the train who were standing were like silos that you would see on a farm. No communication, most of them wearing earbuds and listening to their music. No one speaking to each other, no one smiling. No one having a friendly smile or a good-natured look on his or her face. Rather, as is usually the case, a slightly annoyed look, or maybe even slightly aggressive, as if to say, "Don't bother me. You are entering into my space."

So, I thought about the woman, hoping she wasn't a crazy person. And then during the night last night, it occurred to me—I know why she was friendly and why she smiled. The answer is that she was probably coming from another town or city, or possibly even another country, and she thought that what she was doing would be considered normal here when it isn't always considered.

Now, I might be exaggerating somewhat, but I did have a slight fear of her.

Now, juxtapose that event with what Jesus says to us in today's gospel. The Pharisees asked him, "When is the Kingdom of God coming?" And Jesus says, "The Kingdom of God is among you." What a jolt that is. What a juxtaposition of a point of view. To say "The Kingdom of God is among you" is about the same as saying, "The Kingdom of God is within you."

And that is the main point of today's homily. The Kingdom of God is within you and within me and within all of us. After all, we have already received Jesus in our lives through the Holy Eucharist. We have committed ourselves to him in baptism and confirmation. We have already been endowed with many gifts and charisms that are useful for advancing the Kingdom of God on earth. These are not our own charisms; they are given to us to be used for the advancement of the Kingdom.

So, let us do that. We tend to live in a world, at least in my city—perhaps yours as well—that is characterized by unrest, divisiveness, and sometimes darkness, with an ever-increasing amount of crime. Consider all the wars that are happening around the world. So, it seems to me, in light of what Jesus says to us today, that it is our responsibility as committed Christian people to advance the Kingdom of God, perhaps even through something small, such as smiling at someone or making friendly conversation.

We don't always have to be afraid.