

Concerns Within the Divided Union

We must never be so naive in our hope for solidarity that we neglect to identify and correct our problems.

So, while [yesterday's editorial](#) concentrated on hope found within the divided union, today we shift gears to honestly and genuinely address concerns.

Communication and compromise offer the promise of a more hopeful path forward, but we need to lean into that future with open eyes, minds, hearts, ears and arms.

Therefore, here is a list of concerns I compiled as I listened to President Trump's Tuesday evening State of the Union address and the Democratic rebuttal.

1. There seems to be a growing emphasis upon the evils of taxation.

Taxes are often difficult to swallow, but let us never forget that taxes pay for schools, military personnel, first responders, roads, bridges, national parks, natural disaster relief, care for the vulnerable and much more.

Jesus never told us to not to pay our taxes. In fact, he did quite the opposite. Taxes are a necessity for the common good of society - a topic explored in EthicsDaily.com's "[Sacred Texts, Social Duty](#)" documentary on faith and taxation.

2. The tension and divide between races seem to be intensifying and broadening.

We must be mindful of our rhetoric and conscious of policies enacted. Much of what we hear from Washington, D.C., these days sounds demeaning and feels threatening toward people of color. Some of what has returned sounds similar.

We must treat each other with dignity and respect. We are all God's children,

created in God's image. If only we would act like it.

3. Immigration debates should never abandon a human focus.

When immigration debates take place, a sound policy will always factor the human component into the equation.

We get so caught up in walls, Dreamers, family reunification (often incorrectly called "[chain migration](#)") and refugees that we forget actual flesh and blood exist behind those debates and taglines.

Jesus told us to welcome the stranger because he knew most often that the stranger was a mom or dad just trying to do their best.

The U.S. can have both border security and benevolent immigration policies if we remember the humanity within the conversation.

A [2008 pastoral letter](#) from Bishop Anthony Taylor of the Little Rock Diocese remains a constructive, practical and biblical way to discuss these topics.

4. American isolationism and exceptionalism will lead to our long-term demise.

Believing and acting as though you are the only entity that matters places you upon a road of self-destruction.

The U.S. is a remarkable country, but when we ignore our sins, refuse to right our wrongs and arrogantly tout our superiority, then we have taken a blind step into a dark future.

Some of our best moments have been when we repented as a whole and moved forward together. Humble hearts lead to rational minds.

5. The U.S. cannot spiritually, emotionally, economically or ethically enter into a new arms race.

We currently possess the most well-equipped and well-trained military in the

world and more weapons than the world can withstand.

So why do we need more? Why are we not attempting to create an arsenal of peacekeepers instead of warmongers? Why can't we choose diplomacy and dialogue instead of sword-rattling?

Blessed are the peacemakers, Jesus said, and those who live by the sword will die from it.

While these are my concerns, I understand there are other perspectives and other worries. I am not arrogant enough to believe my concerns outweigh everyone else's, so I am ready to listen with open ears and a closed mouth.

However, the issues I listed are at the very heart of our humanity.

We are at a point in history where we need to make some decisions. As a nation, what kind of country do we truly want? What does it mean to be a citizen of the U.S.? What kind of people have we become and what kind of people are we becoming?

More pointedly, what kind of Christians are we being? What kind of Christians are we becoming? Are we still following Jesus or have we pivoted to follow the world?

I do have genuine concerns, as does everyone else, but my concerns are measured against a great hope.

We have our problems, but if we can ever figure out a way to communicate and compromise, then we might be able to move forward much stronger than ever before.

That is my prayer; that is my hope.

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Editor's note: This is the second in a two-part series reflecting on the 2018 U.S.

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State of the Union address. Part one is available [here](#).