Come together, open your hearts, and join in God's ministry!

Recently, I had a strong, intuitive experience while at a meeting in Austin, Texas, at the Seminary of the Southwest. It was brought to my attention that while seminaries around the country are struggling to maintain any sense of viability, the seminary in Austin is considering an expansion project. This project includes, among other things, extending the student population, particularly in the Masters of Divinity program. They are acting against all data and logic. The data indicates there are increasingly less students entering seminary within the Episcopal Church, in search of a Masters of Divinity degree. Logic would suggest finding new ways to address theological education. Nevertheless, the Seminary of the Southwest believes, at its core, that residential learning is critical to the theological success of our church.

The intuition I had while sitting in the meeting in Austin, listening to people speak of their dreams, was that there will be more students seeking Masters of Divinity degrees because renewal is coming to our church. I believe this has to do with the Episcopal voice of reason, which is desperately needed in the midst of our civil conflicts spreading across the country, centering on our nation’s politics. I believe we have become a polarized nation in need of a voice of hope, faith and reason.

The gospel message of our Lord Jesus Christ provides that voice. It is our task to proclaim the Gospel in ways that confront the increasing incivility that inhabits our nation’s discourse and, I believe, threatens the very core, the beating heart, of our country.

As I write this, only yesterday in California protesters and a presidential candidate's supporters were engaged in fistfights on the streets while the police looked on helplessly. This has become a common occurrence, as if it is normal and acceptable. On a recent clergy dream day one of our priests shared with me his love for cinema and how cinema often reflects what's going on in the culture. He pointed out to me in particular the recent superhero movies where superheroes are confronting one another, wreaking havoc because of their own agendas instead of assisting humanity as they are supposed to. The cinema is reflecting the mood and tone of our country, indicating a kind of civil war at work. It may not be the kind of war that President Lincoln addressed between North and South, but rather a civil war that will claim the future of our nation.

Will we go backwards and be a regressive nation, trying to seek again what many believe were the good old days? Will we be a nation that continues to become increasingly polarized and divided because of the vast disparity of our economics? Will we move forward as a nation affirming all people are created equal and where there are religious liberties for all?