

Happy Monday to all,

On this date, November 10, 1940 Walt Disney began service as a confidential informant for the Los Angeles office of the FBI to report back information on Hollywood subversives. “Uncle Walt” informed the FBI about perceived political subversion, specifically by reporting on the activities of individuals in the entertainment industry like actors, writers, producers, and union leaders suspected of communist sympathies.

The surveillance of certain political, ethnic, religious and immigrant communities is not new. It echoes the FBI's historical Ghetto Informant Program of the 1960s and '70s, which used thousands of paid informants to monitor Black communities for civil unrest.

Those who are marginalized, outcast, economically challenged and vulnerable are often easy targets for those who seek to misuse or abuse a judicial system that relies on informants. Social alienation increases the risk of manipulation by those in powerful positions.

Tactics may include actions such as leveraging ongoing visas or immigration applications, threatening to place individuals on government watch-lists, or implying that non-cooperation could cause problems for them and their families.

Faith based communities have been targeted. In addition to historic injustices to Muslim and Jewish congregations, a 2023 internal memo from the FBI's Richmond Field Office alleged that the Catholic Church supported "radical traditionalist Catholic ideology" and racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism. Vulnerable members of the clergy and laity were “encouraged” by government officials to cooperate in the investigation in ways that were less than morally and legally acceptable.

Catholic teaching does not have a specific policy on the use of FBI undercover informants. It does, however, emphasize God-given, inherent and permanent human dignity, human rights, and the importance of solidarity, justice and compassion. On the other hand the right to the truth, for any organization or entity, is not absolute. Not everyone has the *right* to know the truth. The *Catechism* teaches that "charity and respect for the truth" must guide a person's response when asked for information. The overall good and safety of others, and respect for privacy, can be reasons to be silent or to use discreet language.

Scammers often impersonate government officials, law enforcement officials, or reputable organizations to commit criminal acts. Today, this is particularly common in relation to the immigration crisis. The Federal Trade Commission and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) have identified several common types of fraud, particularly with agents identifying themselves as Notario Públicos. Too often these Notarios are not certified to provide legal counseling and frequently charge excessive fees.

Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services Program has been assisting individuals to navigate the complexities of immigration for decades, providing compassionate guidance and assistance in every step of the process. With extensive knowledge and in partnership with reputable

immigration law organizations, such as the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC) our staff is ready to assist individuals with the following services:

*Permanent Residence, Citizenship/Naturalization, Family Petitions, Extreme Hardship Waivers, DACA Renewals, Residence Card Renewal, Affidavit of Support, Citizenship Mock Interviews.*

Additionally, Catholic Charities of Stockton offers "Know Your Rights" guidance designed to help immigrants understand their legal rights and how to act during encounters with law enforcement or immigration officials. These presentations often cover topics like how to respond to ICE, create a family preparedness plan, and what to do in case of detention. The goal is to combat misinformation and empower immigrants with knowledge to keep themselves and their families safe, regardless of their legal status.

All services are confidential and policies are in place and monitored to ensure client privacy. It is not the policy of Catholic Charities to hire or retain any individual acting as a confidential informant.

We would all do well to live by the words of Pope Francis, “ Gossipers are terrorists because with their tongues they drop a bomb and then leave, and the bomb they drop destroys reputations everywhere.” AMEN!!

Blessings,

Deacon Mike