

Happy Monday to all,

On this date, February 23 in 1967, writer Noam Chomsky published his iconic anti-Vietnam war essay "The Responsibility of Intellectuals". The essay condemned American intellectuals and technocrats for serving state power rather than the truth. Chomsky argued that privileged intellectuals, with information and insight into unjust and immoral actions by those tasked with power and leadership, have a moral obligation to expose government lies, analyze actions, and oppose wrongdoings. The good of the society comes before one's own best interest.

Although Chomsky identified as an atheist and a secular humanist, his views expressed in this essay were very much aligned to Catholic Social Teachings (CST) on this issue.

Throughout human history, society has treated people unjustly based on race, gender, class, religion, and ethnicity. The practice continues today and our faith calls us to rise up against injustice wherever it exists.

In his Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium Et Spes*), Pope Paul VI explains that every form of discrimination and injustice is inconsistent with God's intent. The faithful have a responsibility to fight against them. CST holds that state authority is legitimate only when promoting the common good and upholding human dignity; when authority acts unjustly, citizens have a moral obligation to resist.

Intentional cover-ups and the release of misinformation by the U.S. federal government is not new. It is also not specific to a particular political party or social leaning (e.g. conservative or liberal).

For example in 1971, a classified report referred to as "The Pentagon Papers" revealed that the U.S. government, including the Truman (Dem), Eisenhower (Rep), Kennedy (Dem), and Johnson (Dem) administrations, systematically lied to the public and Congress about the scope and activities of the Vietnam War.

In April 2025, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) said it would not renew its cooperative agreements with the federal government related to children's services and refugee support after its longstanding partnerships with the federal government became "untenable." The Bishops still await for more than \$24 million in federal funding for services already provided.

Currently, the Republican led federal administration has been accused of intentional cover-up and/or release of misinformation, particularly related to immigration/asylum issues. Mass abductions, clandestine interments and deportations, along with the actions of large numbers of federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol agents sent to targeted cities have been criticized in multiple statements released by U.S. Bishops.

In light of the physical and emotional toll that secrecy, deceptions and injustices can impose on society as a whole, Pope Leo XIV has issued a statement providing guidance that Mr. Chomsky's writings failed to provide. In his 2026 Lenten message, Pope Leo XIV states:

*Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.*

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2026/02/13/260213d.html>

And as we have most likely all heard, "Faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Have a blessed Lent!

Deacon Mike