

# Justice and Unfounded Accusations

Ah, the rumor mill. If we could get a patent on the rumor mill, Catholic Charities wouldn't have to hold fundraisers to help sustain and expand our services. (And thank you to all those who attended and supported our first "A Movable Feast.") Think about all the rumors we've heard or passed along, many times secretly questioning whether it could be true, but it sure seemed like a good enough story to share.

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**A**lways remember: rumors are carried by haters, spread by fools and accepted by idiots.

Ziad Abdelour

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Beatles crossed that London street; to the overwhelming evils of Nazi Germany spreading deadly untruths about Jews as the enemy of Germany, thereby justifying Kristallnacht, concentration camps and the Holocaust; to the rumor of an abduction (again by Jews) of a 4 year old girl in Massena, N.Y., that led to rumors about Jewish ritual sacrifices and was only dispelled after the missing child wandered back into town the next day; to the rumors that no Jews were killed in the 9/11 attacks on New York's twin towers because they had been warned or had planned the attacks, despite the fact that 15% of the 3,000+ victims of the attacks were Jews. In social science circles, this is known as "blood libel." Spreading rumors creates

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## Charitably Speaking



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real threats to innocent lives.

Or the rumor that refugees from war-torn countries are somehow attacking the United States from within, despite the fact that NO refugee, vetted by the U.N., the State and Homeland

Security Departments, and international police agencies, has been charged with an act of terrorism in the United States since the early 1950's. Definitions are important and facts are great antidotes to the poisonous unreliability of rumors.

In moments of weakness we can all be taken in by rumors. We can hear them and, even though incredible, still believe them. But we need not pass them over the internet, or poison the well in the workplace. We need not become the modern day lynch mob of the fictional victim in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or successors to the real life criminals who killed Emmett Till.

When we hear about uncharacteristic behavior, or sensationalistic stories about other religions' beliefs, we don't have to hide behind the attractive but lazy impulse to generalize to the negative, e.g., "All (fill in a religious, political, ethnic or racial group) are (fill in your own slur)," as justification for passing on a destructive but unsupported conclusion or rumor.

In our lives and programs, in moments of triumph and success, but especially in moments of weariness and vulnerability, we are well served by remembering our mission to "serve God's people with compassion, dignity and respect."

There's an old saying, "The reason a dog has so many friends is he wags his tail instead of his tongue." We have better things to do with our language than spread rumors.