

Snipers on the Roof

Mitt Romney graced our little town with a visit today for a rally on the west lawn of Flagler College. Security was tight and included two well placed, but not easily seen armed Secret Service Agents on the Memorial Presbyterian dome, which overlooks the college and much of downtown St. Augustine. Thousands turned out to see the presumptive Republican nominee for President, to hear him speak for a few moments and then to enjoy a rousing rally. I have to admit I didn't walk over for any of it, not for any political reasons but I just don't like big crowds, plus it was sunny, hot, and humid. But, I keep going back to those two marksmen on the dome, not because of any church and state issues or even any deep theological issues, but because of what it says about the nature of the world in which we live. Violence has become a way of life in the United States. Not only are political figures targets, but average men and women and children going about the daily business of living are as well. It isn't surprising, though, when you think about it. We glorify violence in the media, language promoting violence echoes in popular song lyrics, and and computer games - I don't know what else to call them - glorify violence as well. Sure, it is only a game, but the constant exposure most certainly leads some among us to conclude that violence is the preferred, if not exclusive way for resolving differences, and the line between fantasy and reality grows blurry at best or disappears at worst. But all we seem to do as a culture is wring our hands, ask victims how it made them feel, and leave make-shift, temporary memorials of stuffed animals, balloons, and wilting flowers on blood-stained sidewalks where some innocent or innocents lost the gift of life.

I've never owned a firearm. I've never even fired one, but I don't have any difficulty with those who do keep weapons for personal safety or use weapons hunting for game. What I cannot for the life of me understand is why we cannot more strictly control the calibre of weapons placed in the hands of any Tom, Dick, or Harry? Who really needs assault weapons for personal safety or hunting? Who needs a storeroom of ammunition? Yet when you begin to talk about curtailing any of this there are always the few who declare that any control constitutes a threat to their constitutionally guaranteed right to bear arms. It seems to me, at least, that this is a classic case of the tail wagging the dog.

Christians disagree on this issue, I know (as we do on most issues), but I would like to think that we who follow the Prince of Peace might be able somehow to find some way to lead this nation toward a more moderate, sensible, gun policy for the welfare of all the people. I don't imagine that the politicians will ever be able to succeed. Who, then, if not us? That's my opinion, anyway. Let me know what you think.