

Friends

Last Monday was Garter Day at Windsor Castle. Founded in 1348 by Edward III, the Most Noble Order of the Garter brought together the sovereign and twenty-five of the outstanding military leaders of the country and also established a new fellowship in religious worship “to the honour of Almighty God, the glorious Virgin Saint Mary and Saint George the Martyr.” Each year the Sovereign and knights came together in Windsor Castle for three days, met in Chapter, feasted in St. George’s Hall and occupied their stalls in the chapel for Matins, the Eucharist, Evensong and a Requiem for the departed knights. This three-day festival was observed annually for two hundred years. It gradually lost its significance, becoming smaller and not necessarily associated with Windsor at all, until in 1948 to celebrate the six hundredth anniversary of the Order, and probably also understanding how much the country needed some pomp and circumstance after the depredations of the war, his late Majesty, King George VI commanded that the knights should meet in Windsor and, after a Chapter meeting, process through the Castle precincts to a service in St. George’s Chapel. Since then, a Garter Day of this type has been held most years.

The procession on Garter Day is not just about a way of proceeding from the Upper Ward to the Chapel, but is also a public witness to the long tradition of the Sovereign and members of the Order giving their allegiance to God. Mark and I were privileged to be among those inside the Castle precincts to whom this witness was made. After the appalling behaviour at Trooping of the Colour (and whatever one’s opinion of the Royal Family, booing a carriage with children in can never be acceptable) it was lovely to be involved in this very civilised event.

Public witness in these difficult days is always important. It is why Sophie and I went to the Slough Gurdwara on Tuesday to present a letter of support on your behalf to our Sikh neighbours. It is why celebrating the 150th anniversary of Windsor Methodist Church and the 130th of Burnham Methodist Church matter. In this way, we too can bear public witness to the decision we have made to give our allegiance to God.

May he bless us in these days, Vicci