



Speech by Archbishop Justin Welby at the Buckingham Palace reception today marking the 50th Anniversary of the Investiture of Prince Charles as HRH The Prince of Wales.

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, Prime Minister, First Minister, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,

"Ich Dien", I serve, is in the present tense. It is a present continuous, a duty that goes on. As His Royal Highness says there is always more to do.

But it is much more, for it is also a statement of character, and the more exalted the role, the more demand there is on the character.

When you are second in the land, to serve is not automatic, human nature relishes leisure and privilege: serving requires discipline, values, a moral drive that sees service as virtue.

Never in the history of the role can there have been such dedicated service, such honourable fulfilling of the promise at the Investiture, "I, Charles, Prince of Wales, do become your liege man of life and limb and of earthly worship, and faith and truth I bear unto you, to live and die against all manner of folks."

Service was in the oath, and service has marked the 50 years, service often publicly unnoticed, unseen.

A role has been imagined and developed, different to that of the Sovereign, probing, asking, suggesting and prompting, yet always in the service of Crown and country, under God.

The character required includes the rare gift of humility, of accepting advice, of knowing limits. It requires perseverance, because service may become wearisome, and the self seeks to push forward.

This Prince of Wales has guarded the sacred duty of service and kept the fire, not only alight but burning more brightly with the passing years.

Service requires character, but issues in actions. There is not time, there could not be time to list the actions, they are too numerous.

From service to young people and those caught in poverty, a prophetic voice on the environment, proved by time and events, concern for all who serve our country from the armed forces to the police, compassion for the suffering and humour with the brave and rejoicing, the list goes on and on.

The Investiture was unique. Seldom can a coming-of-age have had such a setting; seldom can the weight of expectation have been so great.

In years since then, we have seen how the honour of being granted that title has been richly repaid – in The Prince of Wales's love for the country whose name he bears, and in the deep respect he has always shown for the land, for the language, and most of all, of course, for the people.

As we look to the future, on behalf of all here and so many across these Islands, the Commonwealth and around the world, I express gratitude for your tireless work, and heartfelt appreciation for all that you, with the wonderful support of The Duchess of Cornwall, have done, are doing, and will do.

May the grace with which you have fulfilled your present duties to these countries, to the Commonwealth and the international family of nations, help you to bring even greater honour to your future service in the years to come.

