

**Liberation Day Speech**  
**Timothy Le Cocq, Bailiff**  
**9<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

1. Your Excellency, Chief Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am deeply privileged to welcome you to this 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of Jersey from occupying forces.
  
2. Most of you will be watching this today from your own homes, safe I hope, either over the internet or on television. That alone illustrates just how unusual a Liberation Day this is.
  
3. None of us could have imagined a few short weeks ago, that we would have been marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Occupation in this way. We were looking forward to gathering together in Liberation Square in the greatest numbers ever, perhaps in sunshine and bright colours, to celebrate our liberation by the forces of His Majesty the King on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1945. We anticipated a Royal Visit, festivities here in Saint Helier, gatherings in our parishes and the other things that have come to mark a traditional Liberation Day in Jersey and the special plans for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. None of that was to be.
  
4. Today, instead, I am speaking to you from one of the balconies of the Royal Court Building in the Royal Square. This balcony is only a few metres, a social distance if you will, from the place where my greatly respected predecessor, Bailiff Alexander Coutanche, spoke to a

packed square below following the announcement that Jersey was to be freed after five hard years of enemy occupation. I can barely imagine how he must have felt on what was, for so many, an unequivocally joyful occasion.

5. I, like many of you, grew up on stories of the Occupation: from my father who served overseas and came back with Force 135, my mother who was a child evacuee, and my grandparents and uncle who remained here throughout. Many of us have similar stories and I hope that some of them, at least, are being remembered and retold by you on this day.
6. It is our job to remember and to tell. To remember and to explain for the younger generation what happened here, what people endured and experienced, their hunger, fear and the relief and happiness at the restoration of freedom that this anniversary represents.
7. It is tempting, perhaps, to suggest that we are experiencing in our current situation of lockdown, what those here during the Occupation experienced. It is not, of course, the same. During the Occupation our people experienced 5 years of enemy subjugation, real hunger, the fear of deportation, examples of cruelty, extreme deprivation. There was no sense of when, or even if, it was all going to end.
8. It is not the same. But there are parallels. During those years the people of Jersey were faced with an enormous challenge. Almost in

an instant their lives were drastically changed. They were no longer free, they were cut off from the outside world, from loved ones.

9. Our world too has been changed and we too are cut off from loved ones and the easy social connection that we have taken for granted. For many, this is indeed a very difficult time.
  
10. During the Occupation there was endurance and community spirit. Some took risks and paid the price to protect and shelter others. We have all heard the stories that can make us proud of what was done by many during those years, the spontaneous acts of kindness, of bravery, of resistance. Our people showed themselves to be tough and resilient. These things are part of the Jersey spirit.
  
11. And we are showing those qualities and that spirit today, in the dedication and selflessness of our Healthcare workers, in those who work in our care homes, in our emergency services. It is found in those who work to maintain the infrastructure, and essential supplies on which the rest of us depend. We see it in those who have responded to the current challenges by volunteering. It has shown itself in the ceaseless efforts of those in government and the civil service who are working long hours to grapple with the challenges we face. It is shown in the work and dedication of our States Members in responding to this crisis.

12. But it also shows in the rest of us who have followed the guidance and directions of our experts and government. Those steps that we have taken and are taking, and the restrictions we accept, which I recognise have had a significant impact on everyday working lives, are keeping all of us safe by protecting the community as a whole. We are entitled to be proud of what we have all achieved.
  
13. This is what Jersey is about, the Jersey spirit, and it shows a resilience that those here in the Occupation would have recognised. Jersey people, wherever we are from or whatever our mother tongue may be, are strong and community minded and I am proud to be Bailiff.
  
14. I know, though, that the burden of these current restrictions has fallen heavily on our senior citizens. Many are deprived of valued connection with family and friends. Some are of the generation here during the Occupation. We owe them a debt for all they have done over the years to make Jersey what it is, and we recognise them at this time.
  
15. Liberation Day calls on us to remember not only the joyful day of freedom in May, 75 years ago but also those who suffered the most during the preceding five years. The evacuees who left their homes for an uncertain future never knowing when or if they would see their families again, the deportees sent away to imprisonment and in some cases death, those who suffered and died here in slavery and forced

labour, those shot for acts of resistance. We remember them all even if we cannot do so in our usual way.

16. But Liberation Day, especially the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, must be a time of looking forward as well as looking back. We can take this anniversary as an opportunity to ask ourselves searching questions. What is truly important to us? What do we value? What do we really need? What can we do without? What gives meaning to our lives? What do we want for our community?
17. If we reflect upon them and reach answers that come from the best in us then we will be making the most of our current situation, the freedoms we all enjoy, and the choices we can make given to us by liberation.
18. Our lives and understanding have been changed over the past months and this is hard. But the marvellous qualities of the Jersey community and its people are clear. We can be confident in the capabilities and capacity of this generation and we can draw from this deeper knowledge in the years to come.
19. Please celebrate this, our national day, safely, in the best way that you can. Even if we are not physically together, we are together in spirit. Thank you.