

Bailiff's Liberation Day Speech - 9 May 2022

Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellency, Chief Minister, ladies and gentlemen.

1. After the restrictions of the last two years it is marvellous to be here on this the 77th Anniversary of Jersey's liberation from occupying forces. Liberation Day is the jewel in our island's calendar, its shine today is even greater by reason of the very welcome presence of their Royal Highnesses and the message that Her Majesty The Queen has been kind enough to send in this Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee year.
2. I am delighted also to welcome as special guests Mayor Reed Gusciora (Gus-see-or-ra) of Trenton, New Jersey (twinned with St Helier); Mayor David Nicolas , the Mayor of Avranches; and the Deputy Head of Mission from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Herr Darius Rahimi. You are all most welcome.
3. As we will shortly see in the re-enactment, 77 years ago today, the Union Flag was raised on the balcony of the Pomme d'Or Hotel behind me and that same flag shortly after unfurled above the ramparts at Fort Regent:

tangible symbols Jersey's long subjugation was at an end and once again we regained our liberty.

4. In this place – Liberation Square- so many people gathered, there was much joy, laughter and tears. In this place my father, as part of Force 135 serving in the Royal Navy, found his younger brother, who he had not seen during the war years and was soon thereafter reunited with his parents and the rest of the family. So many other separated families found each other that day and in the weeks that followed.
5. And when we gather together now, for the first time since the restrictions imposed to battle the global pandemic were lifted, we too come together again as a people. We are all to my mind the inheritors of Liberation Day whether born here or more recently have made the island our home.
6. On this day, when we remember Occupation and Liberation as part of our heritage, private and public memories combine. We must never and do not forget those who suffered during those years and those who were here in the occupation continue to remind us through their retelling of personal stories what it was like so we can learn from them and may reflect - on days such as today full of hope and expectation- on the hardships and sadness as well as the joys of liberation.

7. When we walk in St Helier we can see in the pavement slabs outside the Town Hall we can see quotations from members of the occupation generation. The late Michael Ginns MBE, a Jerseyman once a prisoner in Bad Wurzach, was wise when he said these words carved in stone here:

“Forgiveness leads to understanding. Understanding leads to friendship. Friendship leads to reconciliation. Reconciliation leads to peace, Both in our hearts and in the world.”

8. The world is an uncertain place and we may ask how can this all be solved and what can we do to make it better? The answer is, we do what we can and we have hope. In recent months we have shown our solidarity with the people of Ukraine, we have sent supplies, we have donated money- we give what we may give. We play our part to address global warming, knowing that we cannot solve it alone but hoping that we can solve it together. A very old expression was used in the States Assembly in a recent debate— it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. Well, by these positive actions and others we light candles.

9. The hope and expectation of 77 years ago is ours as well. Jersey has emerged as a community stronger from the experience of the last two years

knowing the freedoms we had taken for granted may not always be available to us but that we can be resilient, courageous and caring.

10. We have the opportunity in a very tangible way to influence the island's future and express our beliefs and values in the weeks to come. We have a general election and individuals will offer themselves for service to the community within the States Assembly. We should not approach this event with cynicism but instead listen to those who offer themselves, and decide who we believe best represents the values of the Jersey we want to see and what we hope for in our community. I make no apology on this day of the celebration of liberty to urge you to exercise our right as free people to influence our future. It is a choice many in the world do not have.
11. I hope very much that you enjoy the rest of the events today and have a most joyful and happy Liberation Day.
12. The 2016 Liberation Day speech in the States Assembly was given by the late and much missed Connetable of St Saviour, Sadie Le Sueur-Renard. Her rendition of "Beautiful Jersey" in English and Jerriais was one of the central points of Liberation day celebrations for many years and she ended her speech like this:

“We have so much to be thankful for in this Island and yet even today we are still learning from humanitarian events around the world. So I would like to say on my mum and dad’s behalf, and everybody who was here:

“Mèrcie bien des fais, à la procheine, à bi.”

13. And on my own behalf thank you very much, until next time.