



**St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sunday 9 May 2021 – Liberation Day
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

What an insight Martin le Boutillier's Occupation and Liberation memories gave us. After the service, you also have the opportunity to review a small collection of items on display of the sisters who were deported to Biberach. In addition, the special family photograph that travelled from those evacuated to England via a German Prisoner of War Camp to family in Guernsey.

Those of us born in the decades after the Liberation can have little grasp of what Occupation isolation must have seemed like, with just a few forbidden crystal radio sets to give an inkling as to the news outside the island plugging the lack of telephone calls, a few Red Cross letters and of course, all this well before the Internet was invented. Perhaps, the two Covid lockdowns we have experienced have given us some appreciation of those 1940s restrictions.

The reading from Isaiah referred to proclaiming 'liberty to the captives' similar to the joy millennia later, of Winston Churchill's radio proclamation when he declared that hostilities were to cease 'And, our dear Channel Islands are also to be free, today'. What though, does freedom really mean? Yes, certainly, a cessation of war, liberation and repatriation but I think it's far more than that.

During the lockdowns we know that many suffered emotionally and physically. All that in a world, which until 14 months ago, advocated financial and social success and being ahead of the herd. But, is freedom solely satisfying our own ambitions whilst ignoring the plight of others?

The vital element that kept people positive, during the Occupation and during our own lockdowns, was the togetherness that we shared. In Biberach, it was a crucifix that reminded the sisters that God's love and power is stronger than human oppression. In recent times, food parcels delivered to doorsteps, Zoom connecting family across the Channel and further afield or, a phone call to cheer those living alone. Those selfless acts of kindness akin to bringing the love of God into hearts and homes. Those are the things that when all else is stripped away mean far more than any amount of social status and monetary wealth, so that all are at parity with each another and not in competition.

You could say that freedom is a willingness to serve others, which is exactly the ethos of the reading from St Matthew with its counter-cultural message. Blessed are the poor, the meek, those who hunger, the pure in heart, the peacemakers. The further we read, the more we grasp that putting self to one side is productive in bringing others together and helping them to be connected. It was that spirit that achieved reconciliation and strong bonds of

friendship with the town of Biberach and beyond. The rewards are not cash dividends in this life, rather they are emotional and spiritual rewards that we will be comforted, filled, receive mercy and above all, we will see God.

To conclude, during the Occupation, it was the spirit of togetherness that won the day and still wins the day over our modern hardships. Abiding freedom is found in the spirit of St Andrew's and the spirit of Guernsey when at their best, they are drawn from the Spirit of God, whom to serve is perfect freedom.

Amen

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