

Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Jouarre
Abbey of Regina Laudis, August 27, 2019

Address by Captain Karen Trueblood who served in the Iraq war, commanding the US Marines 4th Medical Battalion and since retirement has continued to serve her fellow soldiers and sailors, especially homeless veterans and their families.

Mother Abbess, Mothers and Sisters of the Abbey, military service members, fellow veterans, members of the Bethlehem community and friends of the Abbey, I am honored and privileged to participate in today's 75th anniversary celebration of the liberation of the Abbey of Notre Dame and the village of Jouarre by General George Patton's 3rd Army. This is a wonderful opportunity to honor the bravery and dedication of those soldiers who liberated a people. And in doing so, gave birth to a dream and the gift of the Abbey of Regina Laudis. What is cast of liberation, is born out of war. Abbey of Regina Laudis was born out of war.

I offer my sincere thanks to fellow shipmate, Ron Gregory, who served on a ship as part of the recovery of Apollo 7. That space flight was the first mission in the United States' Apollo program to carry a crew into space. Thank you for your service Ron, and for living the Navy's values of honor, courage and commitment.

In the last 100 years, our country has given its youth to World War 1, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Each generation before us has been called to defend our way of life in America or that of fellow man in their country as their freedom is threatened. Every generation bears witness to tragic events and wars. A generation of people, often called the greatest generation, that served to liberate a town in France didn't know the people there. The soldiers were willing to serve a higher purpose, to liberate a village and its people. Much like my generation of military members, we didn't know the people we were fighting for in the desert towns and villages of Iraq.

In 2003, I commanded a Marine Medical Battalion that deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom; 734 doctors, nurses, dentists, corpsman, and Marines went forward to provide medical support to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Forces. Those 734 people ranged in age from 18 to 65—we spanned several generations. We didn't hesitate to serve, we had trained and we knew we could and would save lives. No one wants to go to war but we train and prepare. We build big armies and a navy not to fight, but to maintain the peace.

Our battalion was blessed; all 734 of us returned home. Sacrifice, the ultimate sacrifice is giving up one's life. And yes, our nation lost many in 2003 and in the time since then we have continued to lose those that fight in battles we no longer think about.

But did those of us who lived sacrifice? Yes, we did. Our lives were intact, but one of our greatest sacrifices was lost time. Those that serve can never get back the time of seeing their baby born, a high school graduation, or holding the hand of our parent as they take their last breath. Sacrifice comes in many ways.

But we weren't alone in our sacrifice. We left families behind; spouses had to keep the proverbial home fires burning while we were away, medical and dental practices were put on hold and employees had to find temporary work elsewhere, and neighbors pitched in to keep

yards manicured and helped keep the morale of a nation high. The deployment and war had far reaching arms beyond the sailor, Marine, soldier and airman. The impact of war was felt across our nation. In rural towns and big cities, schools and businesses, everyday Americans rose to the occasion and supported the troops by letter writing campaigns, care packages, and welcome home events. Everyone was involved, for a time.

Today, we have pretty much moved on from the letter writing campaigns, the care packages, and celebration and returned to our lives. We think little of the sacrifice of others, or for that matter, what we can do to continue to serve our nation and each other.

We tend to forget the scores of men and women whose futures were lost so the next generation's futures could be won. For over 200 years, we have had American men and women give the last full measure of devotion to preserve our freedom and help others be free. Just like those in the 3rd Army that liberated Juarre, other service members stepped up and today continue to step forward to give of themselves so those that come after them have the opportunity to accomplish their dreams and live in freedom.

History and Google tells us that 3,524 Medals of Honor have been bestowed on individuals that placed others before themselves. Billy Ray Cyrus wrote a song about a man called Sandy Cane, he left a boy and came back a man. It's a song about sacrifice. This song is based on the quote attributed to a Korean War veteran, Howard Osterkamp. He wrote, "All gave some, some gave all." We, the living, have not given all, but we are still able to give some.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote, "Those who have long enjoyed such privileges as we enjoy forget in time that men have died to win them". Let us never forget the sacrifice of others. Let's not forget the 3rd Army in 1944 and the military of today. Remember their sacrifice.

What will you do with your life to honor their sacrifice? What will you do that will honor the lives given for you, for the time that has been forever lost?

We cannot rest easy on the victories of our past; each generation must take up the cause to keep our future free. We are all called to a purpose. We can't sit and wait for someone else. President Kennedy's famous quote "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.", was applicable then and it still is today. What is it that you are doing today to serve, to be a servant to others?

Being called a servant in today's environment of political correctness has a negative connotation. But if we look to it's true meaning, giving up my own will in order to serve others; that is the definition of self-sacrifice. We can each serve others selflessly, we can each serve others without seeking acknowledgement or accolade, just like the 3rd Army liberating Juarre. They were serving others, freeing others. We need to take the focus off of ourselves and put the focus on others. We all have something to give.

Dr. Michelle Bengtson wrote, "Greatness in God's kingdom doesn't come from being powerful or praised by men. It is a heart issue; we must be a servant to all." Each of us has an opportunity, no matter how old we are, to serve others, to make a difference in someone else's life. Small acts of love have big impacts on the lives of others. Just like a pebble tossed into a lake, the ripple goes out and your deed touches many.

Take a moment now and ask yourself what is God asking you to do? What particular gifts has he blessed you with? We all have gifts and God wants us to use those gifts to do great works through us for others.

Are you gifted with compassion, teaching, leadership, comfort, healing, encouraging and the like? Do you make use of those in your daily life?

Serving others doesn't require joining the military or a big budget, a large staff and volunteers, a media plan and kick off campaign. It starts simply with just you. It can be as simple as taking your elderly neighbor's trash can to the curb each week, picking up a newspaper tossed at the end of a driveway and placing it on the front porch, visiting a nursing home, writing a letter or sending a card to a VA hospital or local hospice, or helping put groceries in a car. Can you volunteer at a school to read to a kindergarten class, can you drive someone to a doctor's appointment or church? Just one small kindness can have a big impact.

Tomorrow when our day starts, we will all have a choice to make. We can choose to serve ourselves, or we can serve others. It starts with one person serving another and that person giving to another. We build it strong by being loving, gracious and forgiving. Can you imagine what our world would be like, if we each placed just one person before ourselves? What if generation upon generation before us, or what if the generation before 1944 had done this, maybe there wouldn't have been the need for the 3rd Army to liberate the Abbey of Notre Dame in Jouarre.

I leave you with this, 1 Peter 4:10 says God has give each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts; use them to serve one another.

God bless each of you. Thank you and Go Navy, Beat Army!