

22ND Sunday in Ordinary Time 2016: “The humbled will be exalted”

August 28, 2016—His name was **Captain Elwood Euart**. A native son of Pawtucket, who at the young age of 28, left home and family to head off to war and to do battle with the tyranny of World War II that threatened humanity. On October 26, 1942 the USS Calvin Coolidge, a troop transport with 5,000 soldiers aboard, hit an American mine and began to sink. As the order to abandon ship was sounded, and everyone fled for safety, Captain Euart got word that six of his men were trapped below, and so without regard for his life or safety he fastened a rope around his waist and went to get them. His mission was a success, but as the last ones were being raised to the surface the ship listed and pulled the young soldier under. He perished at sea and giving his life for his men.

My friends, the Gospel that we just heard [Luke 14:1, 7-14], and in fact every Gospel, tells the story of a roaming Rabbi from Nazareth, a Divine and beloved Son who came from a heavenly home with a message for us that when we **give** of ourselves, even to the fullest measure as Captain Euart did, we follow in His footsteps who did the same for us. The Gospel this morning tells us so clearly that, *“Whoever humbles himself will be exalted, and you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just.”*

That message, for young Captain Euart and for us, should reshape us. It should be a daily reminder that as Catholic Christians it must form the heart of our daily deeds and the way we fashion our lives. In a world that proclaims **self** above **service** and **me** above **others**, we swim against the tide of society in placing **others** above us and in being sure that we spend our every moment serving those around us as the good Master served us.

In February 1943, after censors finally cleared the way for a message to be sent, Fr. John P. Mahoney, the Chaplain on that fateful ship who witnessed this tragedy unfold, wrote to Captain Euart's parents extending his prayers and condolences. He told of the young soldier's deep faith and his daily attendance at Mass. Fr. Mahoney's typewritten letter, saved by Captain Euart's mother, provided her solace as she wished and prayed with all her heart that her son would be brought home to be at rest with her. Fr. Mahoney wrote this:

"Captain Euart completed his service to his country, and today he is in God's heavenly army and with what rank he must have been welcomed by Him who set the example of giving His life that others might live. Captain Euart followed that example even unto death."

In 2014, after recreational divers found in the hull of the ship what they thought to be human remains, they notified officials and in 2015 after Army divers retrieved the remains and family members offered their DNA, a positive match was made and Captain Euart's remains were brought ashore. This coming Wednesday in St. Maria Goretti Church in Pawtucket, we will celebrate a Mass of Christian Burial for a young Rhode Island hero who has been lost and buried at sea for nearly 80 years. The motto of our nation's military, that *"No one is left behind"* rings true across those many years as Captain Euart is brought home for the final time. With full military honors, he will be laid to rest beside his good parents in St. Francis Cemetery where the tombstone with his name on it reads: "Lost at Sea." It will now be changed as his mother's wish is fulfilled and he comes home finally to be with her.

My friends, when we give whatever we give, whether it's in small or large measure, and if we do so in imitation of our Divine and loving Lord who gave us His example to follow, then we work to be like Him and to be sure that His message so powerful and true can make a difference for others and help us, like Captain Euart, earn a place in "*God's heavenly army.*"

God love you.