

## Mass of Christian Burial for Captain Elwood Euart

August 31, 2016—Your Excellency Bishop (Robert) Evans, Your Excellency Bishop (Francis) Roque, Deacon (John) Fulton, Sister Sharon Euart, Chaplain (Alisio) Norgueras, Chaplain (Timothy) Bourquin, members of Capt. Euart's family, distinguished civic leaders, members of our military—especially the members of the 103 RI Army National Guard Field Artillery—and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It would be one of the darkest chapters in humanity's long history: the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. A world was suddenly thrust into war and men of youth and promise were called forward to serve. Patriots of every age, faith, and creed—some of them too young to serve who would falsify their birth dates—came from cities and towns across this great nation to do their part and battle a tyranny that could change the course of human history.

Today, we come here to finally lay to rest one of those young men and one of our own. One who made us proud in life and even prouder in death. Capt. Elwood Joseph Euart, in these past few weeks, has become a familiar name to all of us in Rhode Island. His story, hidden from our view for so long, is now front page news and rightfully so as a grateful State gathers and a nation fulfills its promise to "leave no one behind." Capt. Euart is finally home to be at rest with his parents and family—not far from the very streets where he grew up.

We are so very grateful to Capt. Euart's family who kept his memory alive these many years and who traveled from near and far to surround him with their love and prayers this one last time before he is placed beside his parents who gave him life. More importantly, they also gave him the great gift of Catholic faith; a faith that inspired his life and his final deeds of heroism and valor.

As we know, the story of Capt. Euart's ultimate sacrifice in October of 1942 merits him a place in the halls of our nation's heroes, but it also reminds us of the One who leads the way—the One to whom Capt. Euart had such great devotion. Jesus is the finest warrior of all times, sent to us from heavenly headquarters to battle with the greatest foe of all and finally win that epic battle with the prince of darkness. Our Lord gave His life on the Cross of Calvary so that you and I might live. It comes as no surprise to those who knew him that Elwood—a young boy from Pawtucket, an Eagle Scout and devout Catholic with a keen wit and a quick smile as shown by that wonderful photograph of him—would render his life to save others. In fact, these many years the family has cherished a letter sent to Elwood's parents by Fr. John Mahoney, the Catholic Army Chaplain aboard that transport ship. This good priest's eye-witness account of that tragic day and his kind words to Capt. Euart's parents are an inspiring read as he offers them solace and consolation. Fr. Mahoney wrote this:

*"The ship had listed to one side and Capt. Euart had tied a rope about himself and fastened it to a railing so that he could rescue many boys who were unable to climb up the slippery railing and water-filled ship. And he did rescue them all. Then just as he had expended all of his strength in saving others and two of his officers were about to pull him to safety, the ship went down. Captain Euart's body is still tied to his post. He died doing more than his duty. And his heroic sacrifice has instilled in us all a spirit which will help every man in our combat team to carry on for Captain Euart and for our beloved country."*

In our present day world where evil forces reign terror upon the innocent and promote their misguided belief that killing others merits a place in a heavenly realm, we as Christians follow the example of Our Blessed Savior who gave HIS life and asks us, if need be, to give ours for others to gain the ultimate and eternal prize of heaven. The difference between right and wrong could not be more glaring.

Yesterday at the wake service, our Adjutant General Callahan remarked that the Army—or any other military service or training—does not and cannot teach someone to do what Capt. Euart did. It comes from deep within. Gen. Callahan is right, Capt. Euart's brave actions came from the depth of his faith, a Catholic faith that he cherished and nourished and loved, attending Mass every day on the ship and worshipping a God whose only Son mounted the finest pulpit of all time: that Cross of Calvary. He bowed His head in death and destroyed death forever. How many times Capt. Euart had from his youngest days gazed upon a crucifix in his brief life and thought about that. And as he lowered himself tethered to a rope that day deep into a sinking ship to save others, how Our Blessed Lord must have smiled to see that so many centuries later, brave souls had heard His message and were ready to follow Him so that others might live. My friends, in that letter from Fr. Mahoney he writes of the prayer that Capt. Euart and all the men said every day after Mass called the "Soldiers Prayer:"

*"O God of love, make me a soldier worthy of the great cause for which we fight. Give me strength when the going is hard. Give me courage when danger is near. In thee I place my trust. Lead me through the perils of this war to a better world to which I have dedicated my life. But if the service of thee and my country calls for the sacrifice of my life, I only ask, dear God, that thou would be with me at that moment, confident that thy peace awaits me in eternity."*

My friends, how blessed we are to have him finally here in our midst. Capt. Elwood Joseph Euart, home at last and a hero of our nation and our faith, and to finally offer this Mass of Christian Burial for him. As we lay him to rest to fulfill his good mother's wish that he be with her we do so knowing that his reward is great in heaven where war is no more and peace prevails as the prayer that he said each day was answered in full measure by a God whose Son told us, *"No greater love is there than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends."*

Captain Elwood Joseph Euart, welcome home. Now and always, may you rest in His peace.