I was away last Sunday because I was invited to say the 11am Mass in my hometown of Chepstow as part of the Chepstow Homecoming celebrations. And I have to admit, driving home, and seeing the Chepstow sign, seeing the house where I grew up, the park where I played baseball, the school that I attended, the church where we went every Sunday, and meeting so many people that I haven’t seen in years, I have to admit, I got a bit emotional about it which I didn’t expect!

On the drive back, I reflected on this whole experience a bit more, wondering why this experience turned out to be so important to me? I didn’t expect that to happen – as I drove up there on Sunday morning, I sort of thought of it as just another ‘thing’ to cross off on the calendar, but instead the experience effected me deep down inside!

**And I came to the conclusion that sometimes we need to get back to our roots, back to basics. We need to take time to remember where we came from; to remember what’s important; to remember what it is that has shaped our lives, and to consider how these foundations stones anchor us, give us perspective, and propel us forward.**

In our 1st reading, we hear about poor old Elijah. He’s been working non-stop doing God’s work through the prophecies that he is proclaiming, but he feels like he is getting nowhere. He is so frustrated in fact that he says ‘*God, just take my life! Enough! I can’t do this anymore!*’ He wants to give up, which I’m sure we can all relate to sometimes, but look at what God does. He feeds him with bread from heaven, reminiscent of how he fed the grumbling Israelites with manna in the dessert to strengthen them and Moses on the way to the promised land.

Notice this parallel – Elijah is on the way to Horeb, which is another name for Mt. Sinai where God made his covenant with Moses. God is leading Elijah to a homecoming of sorts – he’s leading him back to the basics, back to where the covenant with Moses began.

Fast forward to the Gospel – we’re still in John chapter 6 this week – the great Bread of Life discourse, John’s treatment of the Eucharist which we have been reading through over the last several Sundays. Notice the pattern – the people are still *grumbling* (there’s lots of grumbling going on!), questioning Jesus’ authority because of his familiarity – ‘*we know this guy’s mom and dad, how could he have anything profound to say?*’ (I’m wondering if I experienced a bit of that last weekend at the Chepstow homecoming!) But anyway, Jesus reminds them of their roots – he reminds them of how their ‘*ancestors ate manna in the desert to sustain them, but they still died.*’ Remember *that* so that you will understand this new reference point – Jesus is the *new covenant* – the bread which will go further - he is the ‘*Bread of Life which will live forever*’, and this bread that he will give is ‘*his flesh for the life of the world.*’

If the pattern continues with us - and I know it does because human nature is consistent - we too *grumble* against God, wondering what in the world he is trying to do with us and with the world around us. I admittedly catch myself in such grumbling for sure! But Jesus points us back to the foundations on which we are shaped; he brings us back to the basics; he reminds us of his presence amongst us – he reminds us of the bread from heaven that he nourishes us with – he points us to the Eucharist, the true Bread of Life that has come down from heaven so that whoever believes has eternal life – may have life in abundance *now*, and into *eternity*.

*Let’s break that pattern of grumbling today*. Let’s turn it into a spirit of *thanksgiving* for all the blessings that we have – a spirit of thanksgiving for this great gift of Jesus in the Eucharist as our *true* Bread of Life.

And in that spirit of thanksgiving, let’s *polish our faith* in Christ and in the Eucharist. Ask yourself this question: If someone were to take a video of us on Sunday morning, would that video have enough evidence to convince a court of law that we truly believe in Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist? When we come in and exit, would the video show a genuflection or bow and a sign of the cross that was truly *meaningful*, or just something we do out of habit? When we listen to the Eucharistic prayer, are we really *tuned in*, listening attentively to the beauty of the words of those prayers? How about the reverence we show in our procession to receive Communion and our return to our seats? Do we return and offer a sincere prayer of thanksgiving after Communion?

I ask you to consider these questions not to shame anyone, but to bring us all *back to the basics* – back to where we came from, so that the Bread of Life we receive can take on a *renewed* and *powerful* meaning in our lives. I have to admit, when I’m celebrating 3 Masses on a weekend and 4 when the 7pm Mass returns in September, I have to very much slap myself out of the complacency that can set in so that I’m not just *going through the motions*, and so that I don’t take for granted the profound and powerful mysteries of our faith that we are celebrating.

*Every Sunday, we celebrate a homecoming*. We come home to God’s house after a crazy week in the world so that he can feed us at the Eucharistic table, and send us forth strengthened by this Bread of Life given for us. Let’s never tire of coming back to this foundation stone of our faith – never tire of coming back to the basics – never tire of being in awe and thanksgiving for the wonders that God does through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in our lives. And never tire of coming home to be nourished by the very Bread of Life, Jesus Christ our Lord. No matter what is going on in our lives, and our tendency to ‘grumble’, let’s always return to the foundation stones of our faith with a spirit of thanksgiving, knowing that God is always by our side – God is always there to sustain us and build us up on this journey through life.