Do you notice a theme in today's readings?

In the 1st Reading Isaiah prophesies that the Temple, God's house,
will become a house of prayer for all people wherever they come from.
In the 2nd Reading, Paul rejoices that Gentiles
are coming to faith in Christ and entering the Church, God's house.
And then in the Gospel Jesus challenges his disciples
to look at the Canaanite woman, a pagan,
as someone beloved by God and deserving of His mercy.
Through these readings, we can hear God asking us to reach out
to those people who might feel they don't belong in his house.
God is telling us that all people are welcome in his kingdom.

Paul says, "Brother & Sisters, I am speaking to you, Gentiles."
Jesus says, "Behold the Gentile woman who cries out to me for mercy."
A Gentile is a person of a non-Jewish nation or of a non-Jewish faith.
By this definition we are all Gentiles.
The Gospel today calls Gentile's "dogs" which is a huge insult.
I don't believe that the readings are out to insult us today…
so let's look closer at the message.

Isaiah lived 700 years before Christ.
The Jewish nation was coming back from the Babylonian exile.
Some of the exiled Jews had brought Babylonian practices with them…
such as idol worship…unclean washing…food habits…and inter-marriage.
The Jewish people hated Gentiles.
However, Isaiah tells the Jewish people…
if non-Jews love the name of the Lord…if they become his servants…
observe the Sabbath…and hold to God's Covenant…
then they <u>must</u> be welcomed into God's house of prayer…

for God's house is for all people.
Isaiah is saying…All are Welcome!
Just accept these simple rules.
Now let's jump ahead in time 700 years and look at the Gospel.
At first glance Jesus creates a lot of tension
by ignoring a Canaanite woman,
who comes asking for help for her daughter.
The Disciples pile on wanting her to leave…
then Jesus seems to insult her by saying,
"It is not right to take food of the children
and throw it to the dogs.".
We could accept the fact Jesus is acting like
a normal Jewish man who called Gentile's "dogs".
However, the real point of this story is <u>not</u>
Jesus being rude to this woman.
The real story is the determined faith this woman has…
that Jesus will drive the demons out of her daughter.
The Canaanite woman's faith in Jesus' saving power
is the central point of this story. Her determination prevails.

Now let's jump ahead in time…the year 2023, today.
Do you and I have the same determination of Faith
that the Canaanite woman had?
I would say Yes. I have seen that you are believers.
Here at St. Pius we call it being a Dynamic Disciple of Christ.
BELIEVE…GROW…GATHER…LOVE…LEAD.
These 5 elements of discipleship
are the foundation of Dynamic Faith.
And I see it every day…in you.
Dynamic is the key word.

Don't you think the Canaanite woman was Dynamic?
She never gave up in her core belief
that Jesus would save her daughter.
And I have not seen you giving up either.
Jesus' heart breaks for those who don't yet know him.
He is always reaching out to them, calling them into his house.
And he does that by leading them to believers who do know him.
That's us!
All we have to do is befriend those people
and share with them how Lord has touched our lives.
We don't have to do it perfectly.
All we have to do is try…and the Spirit will work through us.

I would like to mention the article that Bishop Warfel submitted
to the newest edition of The Harvest.
In the article it calls for all of us to get back
to the basics of our Catholic faith and embrace it.
The article says, "Solid Faith Formation
and Catechesis on Church Teaching invites the faithful
to embrace intentional discipleship."
Our new Bishop Fleming's motto is "Go Make Disciples."
That is what we are to do: Go Make Disciples.
I think the bishop has a point…if we are to make disciples,
we better know what we are talking about.
St. Vincent de Paul has set up what I think
is an effective system for knowing.
1st…Work on your individual spirituality.
2nd…Work on the small group spirituality.
3rd…Go help the poor.

If you look at Scripture…Jesus prayed alone,
then with the Apostles, then He sent them out in 2's.
It has never been easier to learn about the Catholic Faith.
In our modern world it is as easy as going to the Vatican website
and type in any subject.
Now you know where our faith stands.
Or for example, you can go to any Spiritual Practice,
like Benedictines, Ignations, or Franciscans
and learn how they connect with God.

The desire for God is written in the human heart
because man is created by God and for God.
I learned that from the Baltimore Catechism.
Since all human institutions evolve with time,
even the Baltimore Catechism gets updated.
But there are some Catholic truths
that always remain the same.
Basic truths like the Eucharist should be
at the tip of the tongue for all of us.

We just need to be tenacious
and determined believers…
just like the Canaanite woman.