

Session 1



What is Peace?

① *Opening Prayer* (5 minutes) - Psalm 119:165-176

The opening prayer of each session is modelled after the *Liturgy of the Hours*, the collection of Psalms recited daily by priests, deacons, religious, and many laity.

Side 1: The lovers of your law have great peace;
no stumbling block for them.
I await your salvation, O LORD;
I fulfill your commands.

Side 2: My soul obeys your decrees,
and loves them dearly.
I obey your precepts and decrees;
all my ways are before you.

Side 1: Let my cry come before you, O LORD;
give me insight by your word.
Let my pleading come before you;
rescue me according to your promise.

Side 2: My lips shall proclaim your praise,
because you teach me your statutes.
My tongue will sing of your promise,
for your commands are just.

Side 1: Let your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
I have longed for your salvation, O LORD,
and your law is my delight.

Side 2: My soul shall live and praise you.
Your judgments give me help.
I have strayed like a sheep; seek your servant,
for I do not forget your commands.

All: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

② Video Presentation (20 minutes)

Works quoted and cited:

Gallup 2018 Global Emotions Report. Gallup. (<https://www.gallup.com/analytics/241961/gallup-global-emotions-report-2018.aspx>)

“If you live in accordance with my statutes and are careful to observe my commandments... I will establish peace in the land, and you will lie down to rest with no one to cause you anxiety.” (Leviticus 26:3 – 6 NABRE)

“We wait for peace, to no avail; for a time of healing, but terror comes instead.” (Jeremiah 14:19 NABRE)

“For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful.” (Isaiah 9:5 – 6 NABRE)

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” (John 14:7 NABRE)

“Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.” (Psalm 119:165 NABRE)

“Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.” (Romans 13:12 – 14 NABRE)

“Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” (St. Augustine, Confessions, I, I; Quoted in Catechism 30)

“Two cities, then, have been created by two loves: that is, the earthly by love of self extending even to disregard of God, and the heavenly by love of God extending to disregard of self.” (St. Augustine, City of God, XIV, 28)

“He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13 – 14 NABRE)

UNBOUND: A Practical Guide to Deliverance. Neal Lozano (Chosen Books, 2010).

③ Small Group Discussion (30—60 minutes)

1. Does our human need for God’s peace seem more obvious today than in the past to you? Why or why not?

2. Can you think of a time when you experienced God's peace in your life in a particularly memorable way? Describe the experience.

3. Read the following passages. What does each reveal to us about a Christian understanding of peace?

A. **St. Augustine. City of God, Book XIX, Chapter 11.** We may say of peace, then, what we have already said of eternal life: that it is our Final Good.... For peace is so great a good that, even in the sphere of earthly and mortal affairs, we hear no word more thankfully, and nothing is desired with greater longing: in short, it is not possible to find anything better.

B. **John 16:33** [Jesus said,] "I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world."

C. **Catechism of the Catholic Church 27** The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for: "The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator" (*Gaudium et Spes* 19).

D. **Catechism of the Catholic Church 2339** Chastity includes *an apprenticeship in self-mastery* which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy. "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end" (*Gaudium et Spes* 17).

3. St. Augustine describes true peace as the “tranquility of order,” when our emotions (or passions) are all directed to the love of God, rather than the love of ourselves. Is this understanding of peace challenging or surprising? Why or why not?

4. James 4:1—2 says, “Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members? You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war.” How are wars and conflicts in the world rooted in a lack of inner peace?

5. What kinds of things might we need to turn away from in order to more fully discover the “peace” that Jesus promises in the midst of the challenges of life?

6. Who else can you invite to this HEART OF HOLINESS series? Who among your family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers might benefit from being a part of this small group?

④ Closing Prayer of Discernment (5 minutes)

As a group, spend three to five minutes in silent personal discernment. Ask God to prayerfully guide you in answering this question: **What is God calling me to do this week based on what I’ve heard today?** Afterward, pray together the Lord’s Prayer slowly.

God is calling me to:

I will do this on _____(date) at _____(time)