Opening Prayer (5 minutes) - Ephesians 1:3-14

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

Side 1: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him.

Side 2: In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us.

Side 1: In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth.

Side 2: In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.

Side 1: In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s possession, to the praise of his glory.

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.
Video Presentation (30 minutes)

Works quoted and cited:

“Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ...I speak this in the world so that they may share my joy completely. I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one... Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.” (John 17:3, 13-15, 24-25 NABRE)

“We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father's love for us and our real capacity to become the image of His Son.” (Pope St. John Paul II, Homily, World Youth Day Toronto, July 28, 2002)

“I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!” (Luke 12:49 NABRE)

“Sacramentals derive from the baptismal priesthood: every baptized person is called to be a "blessing," and to bless. Hence lay people may preside at certain blessings; the more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry (bishops, priests, or deacons).” (CCC 1669)

“A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse one breaks the spirit.” (Proverbs 15:4 NABRE)

“The tongue is a small member and yet has great pretensions. Consider how small a fire can set a huge forest ablaze. The tongue is also a fire.” (James 3:5-6 NABRE)

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:29 NABRE)
3 Small Group Discussion (30—60 minutes)

1. What do the following passages teach us about our identity as sons and daughters of God, sharing in the life of the Trinity?

   A. Romans 8:14-17 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, “Abba, Father!” The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

   B. Pope St. John Paul II, Tertio Milenio Adveniente 49 "This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3). The whole of the Christian life is like a great pilgrimage to the house of the Father, whose unconditional love for every human creature, and in particular for the "prodigal son" (cf. Lk 15:11-32), we discover anew each day. This pilgrimage takes place in the heart of each person, extends to the believing community and then reaches to the whole of humanity.

   C. CCC 221 But St. John goes even further when he affirms that "God is love": God's very being is love. By sending his only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange.

   D. Pope St. John Paul II, General Audience, July 21, 1999 In the context of Revelation, we know that the “heaven” or “happiness” in which we will find ourselves is neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but a living, personal relationship with the Holy Trinity. It is our meeting with the Father which takes place in the risen Christ through the communion of the Holy Spirit.... Today, personalist language is better suited to describing the state of happiness and peace we will enjoy in our definitive communion with God.... This final state, however, can be anticipated in some way today in sacramental life, whose centre is the Eucharist, and in the gift of self through fraternal charity. If we are able to enjoy properly the good things that the Lord showers upon us every day, we will already have begun to experience that joy and peace which one day will be completely ours.
2. Why is it sometimes challenging to recognize that God delights in us, in spite of our sins? How can we acknowledge that God hates sin, but never stops loving us?

3. How have you felt the power of the words of others in your life? Can you think of an example when someone’s words wounded you? When someone’s words brought you healing? If our words have such power, how should we use them?

4. What practical steps can you take as a lay Catholic to “bless” others and to be a “blessing” to them?

5. What practical steps can you take to deepen your personal relationship with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

6. As we reach the end of The Heart of Holiness series, what has been the most meaningful insight or realization that you have gained?

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)