

▣ Builders of Hope ▣

Book 1

In Covenant with God

In Covenant with God Editorial Team

Saint Mary's Press
Christian Brothers Publications
Winona, Minnesota



Genuine recycled paper with 10% post-consumer waste.
Printed with soy-based ink.

The publishing team for this volume included Eduardo Arnouil, development editor; Jacqueline M. Captain, manuscript editor; Amy Schlumpf Manion, typesetter; Maurine R. Twait, art director; Alicia María Sánchez, cover designer and illustrator; Kent Linder, graphic designer; pre-press, printing, and binding by the graphics division of Saint Mary's Press.

Saint Mary's Press wishes to give special acknowledgment to the ACTA Foundation, for funding that helped to subsidize this publication.

The acknowledgments continue on page 198.

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Printed in the United States of America

Printing: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Year: 2006 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98

ISBN 0-88489-437-1

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In Covenant with God is the first book in the Builders of Hope series. This series was written to promote the development of lay vocation among *jóvenes** in the church and in society. *In Covenant with God* is intended for participants sixteen years of age and older who are in small missionary and evangelizing communities. If used with younger adolescents, it will require adaptations in methodology and substance. It is also suitable for groups of *jóvenes* and for other pastoral settings.

In Covenant with God is designed to begin a process of continuous evangelization and integral formation that leads to a **Christian praxis** once the participants have had a basic experience of life in a community. Its objectives are to lead the participants to discover themselves as persons, to help them understand the meaning of the Covenant with God, and to promote their living out the Covenant both personally and communally. The book emphasizes the vocation and mission of *jóvenes* in salvation history from a **theological** and an **anthropological** perspective.

This book follows the Prophets of Hope model, which is described in the books *The Prophets of Hope Model: A Weekend Workshop* and *Dawn on the Horizon: Creating Small Communities*. For the location of *In Covenant with God* as a resource for the implementation of the model, see appendix 2.

The process of *In Covenant with God* consists of *an initial journey* that helps the participants understand the meaning of the Covenant; *two cycles of community meetings* that focus on various aspects of the Covenant, from the perspective of both the Old and New Testaments; *a formation workshop* that offers an introduction to the study of the Bible; and *a retreat* that is designed to motivate the

*The first time any special term appears, it is presented in boldfaced type. Definitions can be found in the glossary. We suggest that before reading the book, you review the glossary to acquaint yourself with this vocabulary. We also recommend that persons responsible for coordinating and facilitating the meetings carefully study any special terminology used.

participants to live the Covenant at the personal and communal levels. In addition, the book contains *three documents* and *two appendices*. The documents offer different kinds of information necessary for the comprehension of and reflection on the themes that integrate the formation process. The appendices include evaluation forms and a chart of the Witnesses of Hope collection.

This book is an instrument to support the life of a community. Each community should use this resource to the extent that it helps to develop the community's Christian life and strengthen its missionary spirit. It is recommended that the participants keep a diary with their reflections or, at least, take notes in their books.

Methodology of the Builders of Hope series

The Builders of Hope series follows a methodology based on a holistic perspective of young people's human development and Christian growth. It promotes critical analysis of their reality, frequent use of the Scriptures, consideration of ecclesial documents, personal and communal prayer, formation-in-action processes, and Christian praxis.

In Covenant with God, like the rest of the books in the Builders of Hope series, is made up of five modules, which are described below. These modules are the initial journey, the first cycle of community meetings, the formation workshop, the second cycle of community meetings, and the retreat. The coordination of these modules is the responsibility of a coordinating team made up of three to five people. This team is selected from a group of people formed by the *animadores* of all the communities and two delegates previously selected by each community at the same level of formation.

The process in this book starts with a planning meeting. In this meeting, the coordinating team plans the initial journey, the community meetings, the formation workshop, and the retreat. A time line of the different modules appears on pages 14–15.

Description of the five modules

The following is a description of the five modules that make up the process of *In Covenant with God*:

Module 1: The initial journey

The initial journey offers the participants an experience of eclesial community broader than that of their small communities, and helps them enter into the formation-in-action process. The initial journey may last one or two days, according to the judgment of the organizing team. The instructions for preparing the initial journey are found on pages 17–18.

Modules 2 and 4: The cycles of community meetings

Community meetings help the participants to live out a personal and communal Christian praxis in the church and society. The meetings are organized into two minicycles, each of which is made up of three or four meetings focused on themes related to the life of the participants, plus one meeting focused on the evaluation of the content and process of the previous meetings.

Each community should decide how frequently it will meet, taking into consideration its members' needs and commitments. The material designed for each meeting can be covered in one or two meetings, according to the situation of a given community. The important thing is to promote a more Christian life, adapting the materials as the community sees fit. In addition, a period of informal "hanging out" should always be included, as well as some time to discuss the community's shared life.

For each small community to have a life of its own, beyond the series of meetings outlined in this book, it is important that its members interact by calling one another on the telephone, visiting one another frequently, sharing pastoral and recreational activities, and regularly participating in the Eucharist as a community.

To prepare for these meetings and to know how to lead them, as well as to become familiar with their methodology, see the "Introduction: Community Meetings" on pages 30–33. If this material is used with people under sixteen years of age, it is recommended that it be adapted by dividing each community meeting into two sessions, so that the process can better meet the needs of this younger age-group.

Module 3: The formation workshop

The formation workshop is designed to occupy an entire day. Its objective is to allow members of various small communities to interact with one another and learn from trained professionals in areas

demanding academic preparation, such as biblical **exegesis**, sociology, or educational theory. The workshop coordinating team is responsible for hiring the presenter well in advance to secure his or her availability. Additional instructions for preparing this workshop can be found on page 83.

Module 5: The retreat

The retreat offers the participants the opportunity to reflect more deeply on their faith experience—a process that they began during the initial journey and the community meetings. This will help them discern how their human development and Christian growth are proceeding. The retreat also celebrates the community's passage to the next stage of formation. It is recommended that members of various small communities that are at the same stage of formation participate together in the retreat so that they can exchange experiences and share a broader ecclesial encounter.

The retreat is designed to last a weekend. Friday's activities are intended for the participants from different communities to get to know one another and to create an appropriate ambience for the retreat; Saturday is reserved for reflection and prayer; and Sunday is devoted to sharing and celebrating the Eucharist. The coordinating team for the retreat is responsible for contacting a priest well in advance to secure his availability for the celebration of the Eucharist. Instructions for preparing the retreat are found on page 149.

Documents

The documents are informational articles that clarify aspects of faith frequently questioned or that require explanation to be understood. They serve as reference material for the general themes in the book and as resources for the formation workshop.

Appendices

Appendix 1, "Evaluation Forms," offers sample formats for preparing an evaluation for each of the modules. This evaluation of each of the modules in the process is very important for recognizing the contributions made by each module, for identifying those aspects that

need improvement, and for fostering the maturation process of the participants and of the small communities.

Appendix 2 is a chart of the Witnesses of Hope collection. This chart presents the different series in the collection and explains the objectives of each book and its place in the Prophets of Hope process.

Note. The books in this series include the materials needed to design the initial journey, the community meetings, the formation workshop, and the retreat, in keeping with the methodology proposed here. Other resources are needed to help set the ambience for the meetings, to plan games, and to select songs.

Process and Scheduling In Covenant with God



