

**Dawn on the Horizon**

◆ Agents of Hope ◆

Manual 1

# Dawn on the Horizon: Creating Small Communities

Dawn on the Horizon Editorial Team

## Agents of Hope

Manual 1

*Dawn on the Horizon: Creating Small Communities*

Manual 2

*Leaven in the World: Growing in Community Life*

Manual 3

*Servants of the Reign of God: Advising Small Communities*

## Promotores de Esperanza

Manual 1

*Amanecer en el horizonte: Creando pequeñas comunidades*

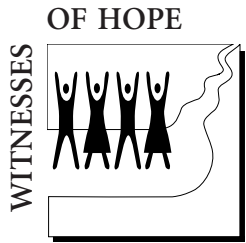
Manual 2


*Levadura en el mundo: Creciendo en vida comunitaria*

Manual 3

*Servidores del Reino: Asesorando pequeñas comunidades*

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*Dawn on the Horizon: Creating Small Communities* is the first manual in the Agents of Hope series. It is designed to initiate the implementation of the Prophets of Hope model for Hispanic *jóvenes* in small evangelizing and missionary communities. In this book, as in the entire Witnesses of Hope collection, the terms *Latino* and *Hispanic* are used interchangeably to refer to native Spanish speakers. They also refer to the Spanish- and English-speaking descendants of these people. In addition, the Spanish terms *joven*, *jóvenes*, and *juventud* may be used occasionally to refer to unmarried people in the age span from sixteen to twenty-four years old because there is no equivalent concept in the English language for this sociological group. A young person, male or female, aged sixteen to twenty-four is called a *joven* if he or she is single. *Jóvenes* is the plural of *joven*. *Juventud* refers to the sociological group formed by *jóvenes*.

The name of the Prophets of Hope model is an expression of the hope that the small communities of *jóvenes* bring to the *juventud*, the Catholic church, and U.S. society. This model addresses the psychological and faith development processes of young people of sixteen to eighteen years old and single young adults up to twenty-four years old. It does so by promoting their maturation process, by providing them with a fulfilling church experience, and by actively involving them in the mission of the church in society.

The overarching scope of this model helps older adolescents and young adults become incorporated as full-standing members within the parish community. In addition, it fosters the leadership of the *juventud* in the church and society inspired by the Gospel, and supported by the ecclesial community.

Two key elements in the design of the Prophets of Hope model—the small communities and the maturation process—are especially appropriate as a post-confirmation process and to provide young adults a significant way to be part of the church. Non-Hispanic ethnic groups, particularly those that have a similar broad concept to embrace older adolescents and young adults, may find the Prophets of Hope model a source of inspiration and the Witnesses of Hope

collection an excellent resource that can be easily adapted to fit their own culture. This flexibility for adaptation relies on the fact that all the books to be used in the small communities process were specifically designed to allow the different Hispanic cultures—English- and Spanish-speaking—the appropriation of the Gospel message and its incarnation in their diverse sociocultural circumstances.

The Prophets of Hope model may be used in different pastoral settings. For example, it can be implemented in a *missionary situation*, when the number of *jóvenes* who want to start a community is small and they need to make missionary efforts before creating the small communities. It can also be used in a *transformation situation*, when a large group of *jóvenes* wants to reorganize into small communities, or a small group wants to become a community.

In an intentional way, the Prophets of Hope model shares the vision and spirit of the three Encuentros Nacionales de Pastoral Hispana, as well as the general objective of the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry. It is intended to help Latino *jóvenes* in the United States do the following:

To live and promote by means of a *Pastoral de Conjunto* a model of church that is: communitarian, evangelizing, and missionary; incarnate in the reality of the Hispanic people and open to the diversity of cultures; a promoter and example of justice; active in developing leadership through integral education; leaven for the Kingdom of God in society. (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry* [Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1988], p. 8)

This manual is divided into two parts. Part 1, “A Process for Creating Small Communities,” helps participants build a small community and experience the dynamics of pastoral ministry in this type of community setting. This part consists of four stages: general preparation, the initial journey, eight community meetings, and a retreat. Through this process, participants receive an invitation to walk with God on a communal journey and, together with other people, to build the Reign of God on earth. The novella, which constitutes the second part of this manual, is a key instrument for the reflections done by participants.

In part 2, “Dawn on the Horizon: A Novella,” a group of Hispanic *jóvenes* express their dreams, problems, values, joys, and

sorrows. Through reading and reflecting on the experiences of the characters in the novella, participants have an opportunity to contemplate their lives in the context of a Christian community. The idea for the novella came from the need to give expression to the experience of Hispanic *juventud*. The novella allows the reader to enter the dialog and identify with certain characters and situations. This leads to a deeper reflection on life and a commitment to the Christian community.

## The Prophets of Hope model

The goal of the Prophets of Hope model is to strengthen the Christian faith of older adolescents and young adults through their participation in small communities. This model has a holistic focus that promotes a close relationship between faith and life, taking the Gospel message into the affective, intellectual, spiritual, and sociopolitical dimensions of the lives of *jóvenes*. It fosters an evangelizing, communal, and missionary spirit that hastens the New Evangelization called for by Pope John Paul II. The model is designed from a prophetic perspective that leads to the growth of conscience and liberation from the bondage that makes it difficult for many *jóvenes* to have loving relationships with one another or with God.

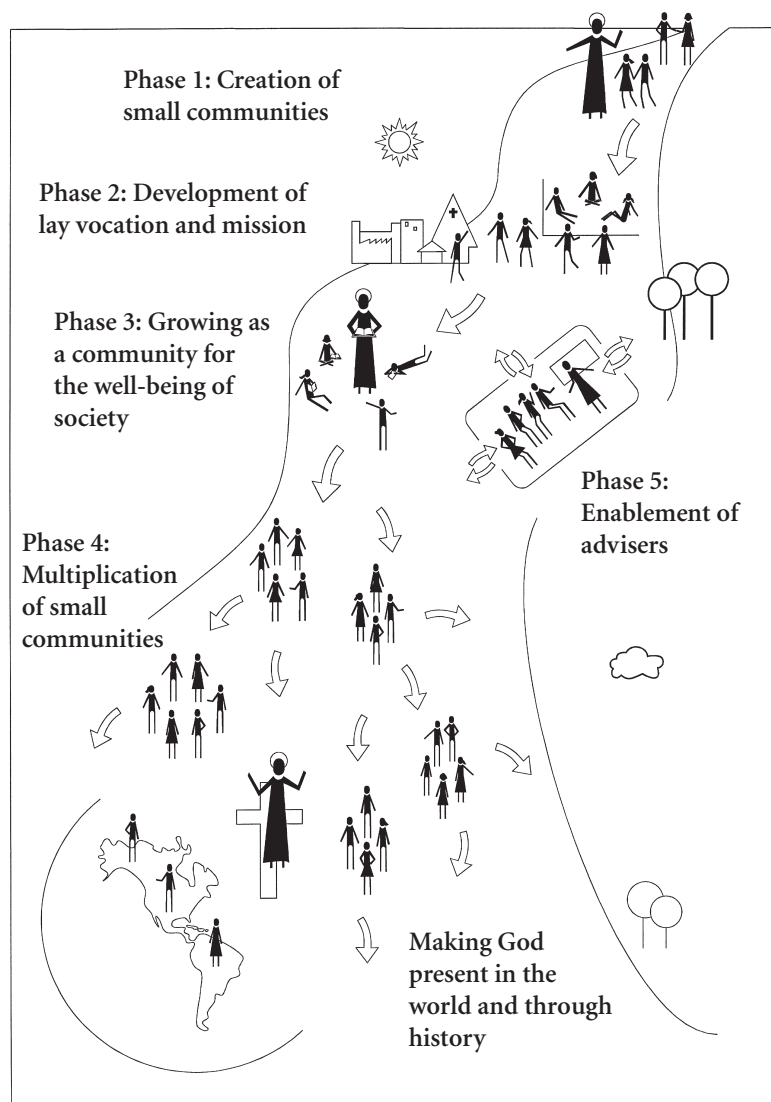
Five interrelated phases that promote living the faith in the ecclesial, social, civic, and cultural spheres of society are used to implement the model. Its design takes into account the variety of situations evident in ministry with Hispanic *jóvenes*, and the model can be easily adapted to local pastoral circumstances.

## The Prophets of Hope process

### Phase 1: Creation of small communities

The objectives of this phase are to establish one or more small communities in a predetermined location, and to initiate the participants into a communitarian type of reflection that will make them conscious of their evangelizing mission and motivate them to assume it.

## Prophets of Hope Process



### Phase 2: Development of lay vocation and mission

The objective of this phase is to help the participants develop lay vocation and mission on both personal and community levels. This is accomplished in five stages that help them gradually fulfill their vision, formation, and commitment as Catholic Christians.

### Phase 3: Growing as a community for the well-being of society

The objectives of this phase are to put in place the necessary conditions to allow for a communitarian experience that enables the small communities to grow and develop, to incarnate the communitarian experience in the lives of the participants so that all they learn or live in the small community becomes a part of their everyday life, and to prepare leaders to create new communities and work with these communities in the initial stages.

### Phase 4: Multiplication of small communities

The objective of this phase is to create small communities based on the experience of those people who are already members of a small community.

This phase may be repeated each year, or when people feel God calling them to do it for a group of older adolescents or young adults. New communities also spring up from older communities that have grown too large for members to relate personally to one another and to participate fully in the group reflections. In these cases, each community should continue the process in which it was involved before splitting.

### Phase 5: Enablement of advisers

The objective of this phase is to train people who want to be advisers for the small communities. It is important to take into account that the advisers are not members of the small communities, and, ideally, they are people who have been through the Prophets of Hope process.

## Four stages for creating small communities

A description of the four stages for creating small communities follows. A timeline appears on pages 16–17.

### Stage 1: General preparation

The success of the Prophets of Hope process depends to a large degree on this stage, in which a group of people referred to as the *launch team* begins the process. The number of team members can fluctuate between three and fifteen, depending on whether the group is in a missionary or transformation situation. The team is responsible for planning and coordinating the four stages, and it constitutes the dynamic force and motivational spirit behind the whole process. This stage of general preparation is made up of three steps:

1. **Launch meeting.** In this meeting, the launch team makes the decision to begin the process of building a small community.

2. **Study of the manual.** Before using this manual, interested people should study the Prophets of Hope model presented here. They also need to become familiar with how to use the manual, as well as with its content and general style. They should then devote one or two meetings to studying the manual together, clarifying what was read and analyzing the four stages. This should take approximately three weeks.

3. **Day of commitment and planning.** This step consists of a day, or at least a whole afternoon, devoted to the following:

- reflecting in a spirit of prayer on God's call to evangelize other people using the Prophets of Hope model
- drawing up a plan to implement the process for the initial journey, the community meetings, and the retreat. This includes selecting and reserving sites for the initial journey, the community meetings, and the retreat. The journey and retreat should be held in a retreat house that offers an environment conducive to prayer and reflection.
- celebrating a liturgy that ritualizes the commitment with Jesus to continue his mission and help one another so that this pastoral ministry bears fruit

### Stage 2: Initial journey

The objectives of the one- or two-day initial journey are different for a missionary situation than a transformation situation. In the former, the objectives for participants are to get to know one another, to encounter Jesus, to experience a Christian community, to become interested in creating a small community, and to participate in the eight community meetings and the retreat. For groups in transition, the main objective of this stage is to have a common experience that promotes movement from a group to a community.

The initial journey stage is made up of three parts: preliminary preparation, immediate preparation, and implementation of the journey.

### Stage 3: Community meetings

Eight small-community meetings are held to encourage personal and group relationships among the participants. The meetings are based on the experience of the initial journey and highlight group reflections on different aspects of the members' lives. The first community meeting is devoted to forming a community. The next six meetings provide group reflections based on the novella and its connection to the lives of the participants. The last meeting focuses on discerning the gifts of each community member in order to use these gifts in the preparation of the retreat.

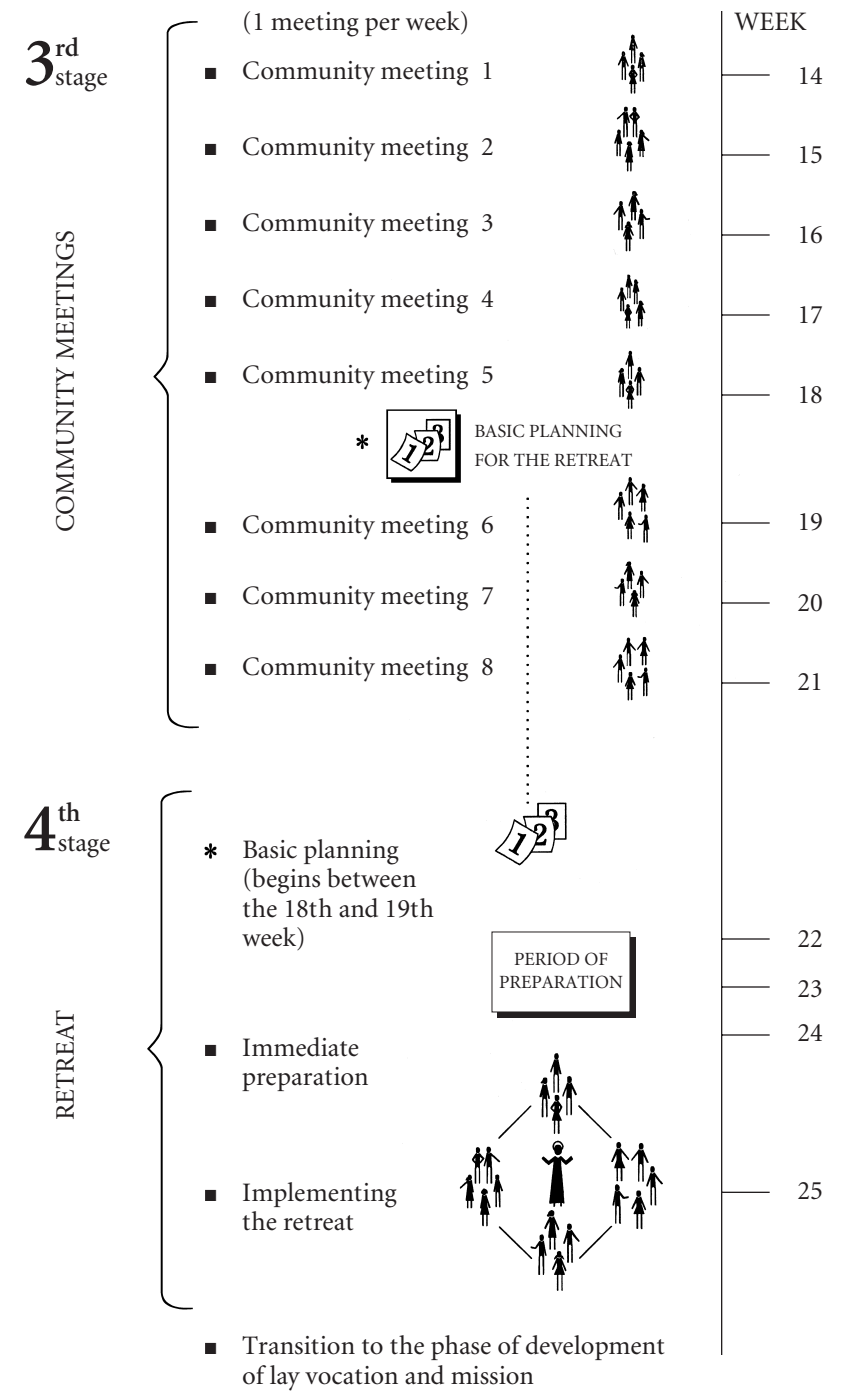
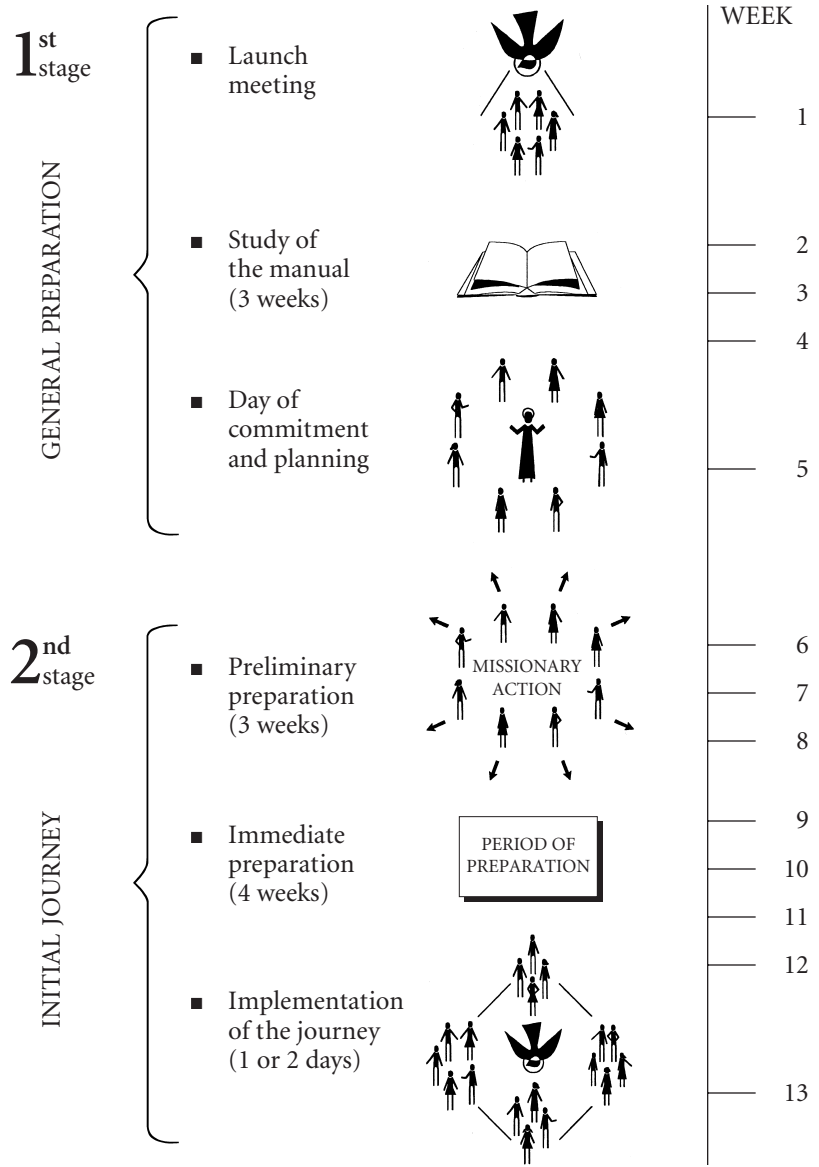
### Stage 4: The retreat

The retreat is designed by the people who participated in the initial journey and the community meetings. The retreat's goals are to reflect on the creation of the small communities phase, to discern the direction the group wants to follow, to prepare for the commitment to continue in small communities, and to begin the Christian formation and lifestyle phase.

This stage is made up of four parts: basic planning meeting, meeting for discernment of gifts, immediate preparation of the retreat, and implementing the retreat.



### Process for Creating Small Communities according to the Prophets of Hope model for formation-in-action



## Other ways of using this book

**Personal reading.** Individuals may want to read the novella for personal growth and formation, learning about themselves through the characters in the story. In this way, they will have an opportunity to reflect on their place and role in life.

**Group reflection.** Communities or groups may use the themes assigned within the community meeting sections for reflection. If desired, sections of the novella may also be used for discussion before each reflection begins.

**Dramatization.** “Dawn on the Horizon: A Novella” may be used as a theatrical production or as a dramatization to spark discussion or reflection. If necessary, chapters may be used instead of the entire novella. The material may be adapted for local circumstances.

**Spontaneous reflection on “Dawn on the Horizon: A Novella.”** Situations portrayed in the story may be used for reflections on various themes in the lives of the participants.

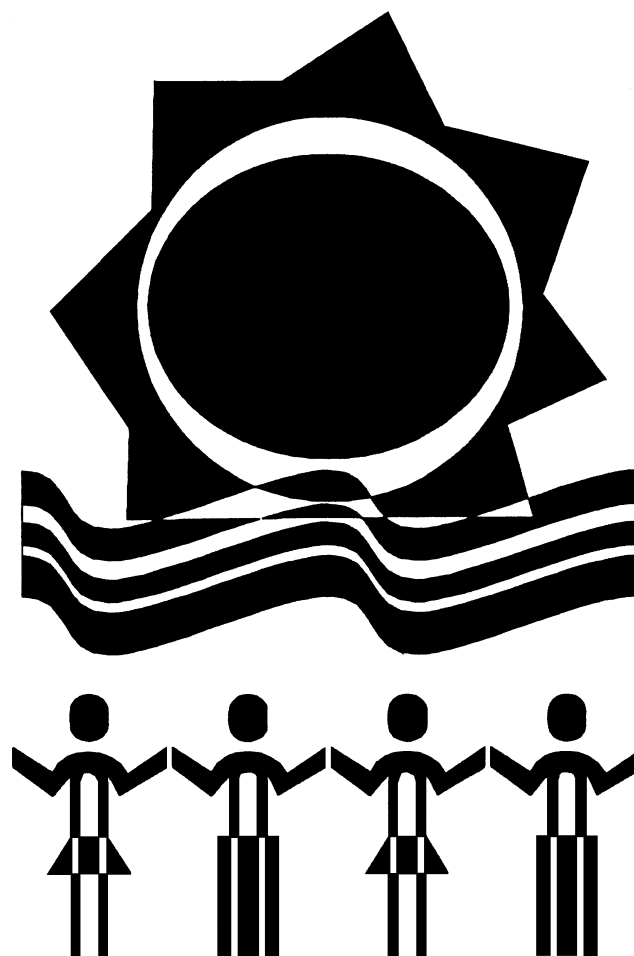
**Creative options.** We hope this book awakens the creativity of people in ministry and communities so that it can be used in new ways, according to their pastoral and practical needs.

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## ◆ Part 1 ◆

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# A Process for Creating Small Communities



## Invited to Be a Community of Jesus



### Overview

### Objectives

- To share life and faith experiences in a Christian community
- To meet Jesus and hear his invitation to be community
- To discern Jesus' call to participate in a community-based ministry
- To organize a small community

### Program

*Introduction.* Welcome, registration, refreshments, prayer, singing, and orientation (2 hours)

*Icebreaker* (30 minutes)

*Session 1: Dawn on the Horizon* (2 hours, 15 minutes)

- Preparation of the drama
- Drama
- Fishbowl group dynamic

*Session 2: Meeting Jesus* (1 hour, 15 minutes)

- Reading and reflection on the Gospel: Mark 1:1–15
- Small-group reflection
- Personal prayer
- Community prayer
- Song

*Session 3: Toward an evangelizing, community-based ministry* (1 hour, 15 minutes)

- Presentation
- Personal and communitarian reflection

*Session 4: Jesus invites us to follow him and form a community* (1 hour)

- Bible circle
- Intercommunication group dynamic

*Session 5: Liturgy of the word and rite of commitment* (1 hour)

- Procession
- Penitential prayer
- Reading of Rosi Viramontes and Paco Arriaga's letter
- Juventud's* Psalm
- Gospel reading: John 10:1–30
- Rite of commitment

*Session 6: Formation of the small communities* (45 minutes)

## Preparation

This stage is made up of three parts:

**1. Preliminary preparation.** In a *missionary situation*, the launch team invites other people to participate in the initial journey. Expected duration for this missionary effort is three weeks, although the time may vary depending on the difficulty of the outreach to other people.

In a *transformation situation*, this step is not necessary. Missionary action will come later, when the communities are ready to do missionary outreach, invite other people to the initial journey, and support them in creating their own communities.

**2. Immediate preparation.** Preparation for the initial journey constitutes a formation-in-action experience for those who participate in it. It is best to begin the preparation at least two months before the event. The program presented at the start of this chapter gives an idea of the process and content required for developing the journey, with the estimated duration of each session. It is up to the launch team to prepare each session based on its experience, research, and prayer; schedule the journey for one or two days, depending on need; and set up the teams needed for the initial journey. Also the team needs to do the following: schedule icebreakers, songs, and break periods throughout the program so that the participants can socialize and have a positive experience; include a celebration of the Eucharist, if possible; and decide whether to end the journey with a social, party, or dance.

It is important for *all* the participants who want to take part in the initial journey to have a role in its preparation and implementation so that they will be able to work together and get to know one another. Ideally, *twelve teams* work on the journey. The participants may work on two or more teams, but it is essential to involve as many participants as possible, especially in a missionary situation. The launch team can begin its missionary work by inviting friends who are not participating in a church group.

Once a team is formed, the members should select a coordinator and decide on a meeting schedule. On the day of the journey, the core, hospitality, and music teams should arrive early to welcome participants. Below is a list of the teams and their functions.

*The core team* is composed of two launch team members, who have been responsible for the initial journey, and one person from each of the other teams. This team organizes the schedule, arranges the site, and coordinates the overall event.

*The hospitality team* is responsible for the welcome, registration, icebreakers, decoration, and environment.

*The liturgy and prayer team* is responsible for the prayers, whether leading them or assigning them to other persons. If a eucharistic celebration is conducted, this team is also in charge of organizing the Eucharist and inviting the priest. In addition, this team is responsible for preparing the prayer site: a chapel, a separate room, or an altar in the meeting room.

*The drama team* is composed of ten to twelve people of both genders and various ages. This team should read the novella *Dawn on the Horizon*; analyze it from their own perspective, from the perspective of those who participate in the initial journey, and from the perspective of an evangelizing, community-based ministry; and then choose three “acts” and present a dramatization of the novella to the entire group. The team is also responsible for the wardrobe, scenery, and music used for the play.

*The speakers team* preferably is made up of people who are committed to prayer, who are familiar with the Prophets of Hope model, and who are ready to study and prepare themselves diligently for their presentations.

*The facilitators team* is composed of two people who facilitate the large-group sessions, and others who lead the small-group reflections.

*The music team* is in charge of selecting, rehearsing, and leading the songs for the day. It also provides songbooks for all participants.

*The advisory team* is composed of a priest or pastoral agents who advise the participants.

*The publicity team* is in charge of publicizing the journey in an appropriate way, according to the pastoral situation—missionary or transformation—in which they find themselves.

*The evaluation team* is responsible for preparing an oral or written evaluation to take place at the end of the event, analyzing it, and making recommendations for improvement.

*The meal team* is responsible for arranging meals for the retreat participants.

The social, dance, or party team decides which of the three events is most suitable for the occasion.

**3. Implementation of the journey.** This part of the preparation consists of a one- or two-day meeting of reflection, prayer, and study leading to the creation of small communities.

## Icebreaker

**Objectives.** To learn one another's names and foster interaction so that the participants feel comfortable working with one another throughout the day

Different icebreakers may be used, depending on how familiar the participants are with one another. If the participants already know one another, the hospitality team may have the retreat begin with songs that enliven the mood, followed by a small-group process in which the group members discuss what motivated them to come to the journey. If the group members are not familiar with one another, the icebreaker should help them introduce themselves and establish rapport. During the welcome and registration, the hospitality team gives each participant a nametag to wear.

## Session 1: Dawn on the Horizon



**Objective.** To reflect on life's challenges and the mission of Christian young adult groups and communities

### A. Preparation of the drama

Members of the drama team prepare and present a dramatization of parts of the novella. The drama should be performed in three acts and may include any number of scenes from different chapters. It is more important for the actors to convey the gist of what the characters in the novella are saying rather than to memorize their lines verbatim. In planning the drama, the following should be kept in mind: present the different kinds of people that make up a group; choose situations that reflect the lives of the participants who will see the play; and present the value of small communities.

## B. Drama

### C. Fishbowl group dynamic

The facilitators team leads the fishbowl group dynamic, which consists of the following steps: forming small groups for reflection; identifying a delegate, or "fish," in each group who will take notes and share them in the large-group session; performing a small-group reflection; and holding a large-group session.

#### Small-group reflection

- What aspects of the dramatization had the greatest impact on you?
- Identify two significant messages for your life.
- What does the play invite you to do?
- What can you do in response to this invitation?

**Large-group reflection.** As the "fish" from each group assemble in the middle of the room, the rest of the participants form a circle of spectators around them. The facilitator starts a conversation among the "fish," who share the results of their small-group reflections with one another. Then the facilitator asks the spectators to add their own reflections, thus complementing the work of the "fish."

## Session 2: Meeting Jesus



**Objective.** To recognize that to meet Jesus through other people, we must be open to receiving him

### A. Reading and reflection on the Gospel: Mark 1:1–15

A member of the liturgy and prayer team makes the following points to introduce the Gospel reading:

The dramatization of the experiences of the group from the novella called *Jesús Peregrino* allows us to become familiar with the characters through stories and action. One way of getting to know Jesus is by learning how he lived, what he did, and the message he left his followers.

Jesus lived at a particular time in history. He worked on the mission given to him by God within a specific culture and society. Jesus was a Jew who lived during a time when his people were ruled by the Roman Empire and influenced by Greco-Roman culture. He was always aware of these realities, and felt he had to overthrow traditions that were not in accord with God's plan for humanity.

It is also important to have in mind that the communities the Evangelists wrote to were very diverse. Some were formed by Jews who had converted to Christianity, while others were made up of non-Jews. Some of these people lived in Palestine, but others lived far from Jesus' homeland and knew little of Jewish customs. Each community tried to understand and follow Jesus within its own reality and experience. Today we must do the same. To a certain extent, the dramatization and reflection make us aware of the characteristics of our own existence, culture, and society. We will now meet Jesus with the help of one of his disciples, Mark.

Either a member of the liturgy and prayer team or someone selected by this team reads Mark 1:1–15 aloud to the group.

After the reading, the presenter comments briefly on the Gospel reading, emphasizing the following points:

- *Mark presents us with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.* Mark starts off by presenting the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. *Jesus* means “Savior” and *Christ* means “anointed” (consecrated by God to save us).
- *We know Jesus because other people introduce us to him.* John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the Jews for the first time and prepared the way for some of them to accept Jesus as the one sent by God. Mark and the other disciples introduced Jesus to other people, and we do the same during this journey.
- *The prophets prepare us to receive the Good News.* Three prophets appear in this passage: Isaiah, who prepared the people of Israel for the coming of the Messiah; John the Baptist; and Jesus, who proclaimed the Reign of God, showed what it meant, and invited people to believe in him.
- *To meet Jesus we need to be ready to change.* Just as we might need to change our life in order to develop and maintain a friendship, we have to do the same to have a better relationship with Jesus.

- *Jesus personified the Reign of God.* Jesus, God-made-man, brought the Reign of God to fruition. Through baptism, God confirmed the mission for Jesus and sent the Holy Spirit to strengthen him in fulfilling that mission.
- *Jesus shared his mission of building the Reign of God with his disciples.* Jesus chose a group of persons and formed a community of disciples. This community helped him fulfill his mission by making the Reign of God present in society.

## B. Small-group reflection

A member of the facilitators team leads this reflection:

When we were baptized, we were called to be followers of Jesus. Since then many people have introduced us to Jesus. Share your experience:

- Who introduced you to Jesus, and how did they do it?
- Who is Jesus for you?
- How would you introduce Jesus to a friend?

## C. Personal prayer

1. The participants form a circle around an altar that has a Bible and a lighted candle on it. The prayer facilitator invites them to close their eyes and prepare themselves to hear the word of God. They should also be ready to respond to that word in their heart.

2. The group reads Mark 1:1–15 again.

3. The prayer leader recites the following sentences, pausing between each one so that the participants have a chance to hear the message and respond in silence.

- Aware that God is truly among us, let us give thanks for Jesus Christ, the Good News, and the Reign of God that is already here.
- Let us remember the prophets whom God has placed in our midst to help us meet Jesus, and let us give thanks for them.
- Let us hear the words of John the Baptist, who invites us to conversion, and let us ask the Lord to show us how we must change.
- We remember that through our baptism the Holy Spirit came upon us and consecrated us as children of God. Let us be mindful of what it means to be God's chosen people, to have the Spirit within us, and to rely on God's grace.

- Just as Jesus, moved by the Holy Spirit, went into the desert to find strength for his mission, we must let ourselves be guided by the Spirit. We pray that we hear God's call and are strong enough to follow it.
- As we follow Jesus, who overcame temptations that would have prevented him from fulfilling his mission, we ask the Lord to help us overcome the weaknesses that prevent us from following Jesus.

#### D. Community prayer

The prayer facilitator invites the participants to make a spontaneous prayer of praise, gratitude, and petition. Members of the liturgy and prayer team begin the prayer and invite everyone to participate.

- Praising God for the people in our life whom we introduce to Jesus, the prophets who call us to change, and those sent to help us in our conversion . . .

*All respond:* Praise to you, Father, for the love you give us.

- Showing our thanks to Jesus for the salvation he offers us in our daily life and on special occasions . . .

*All respond:* We thank you, Jesus, and ask you to continue to be with us.

- Asking the Holy Spirit to help us walk a straight path and follow Jesus more closely . . .

*All respond:* Holy Spirit, in whom we trust, help us.

#### E. Song

The prayer may end with a song about meeting Jesus that has been selected by the music team.

## Session 3: Toward an evangelizing, community-based ministry

**Objectives.** To identify the similarities and differences between group and small-community ministry, and to discern the type of model needed

This session consists of a presentation and three reflections. The reflections are done individually, in small groups, and then in the large group.

#### A. Presentation

The presentation is done by the speakers team and includes an explanation of the similarities and differences between the models for group and small-community ministry, showing the characteristics of each one in a positive light. Chapter 8 of the first volume of *Prophets of Hope, Hispanic Young People and the Church's Pastoral Response*, may be used to help prepare for the session. Ideally, the speakers team should be made up of people with experience with both models.

#### B. Personal and communitarian reflection

##### Personal reflection

- Each participant receives a copy of the chart of the models (*Prophets of Hope*, vol. 1, p. 211).
- The participants study the chart, compare both columns, and evaluate their own experience.

**Small-group reflection.** Each shares the results of his or her personal reflection. Then the group as a whole analyzes the chart and reaches consensus on the three most valuable characteristics of the community model, and the areas the group would need to concentrate on for the model to work. Consensus is defined as a discernment and decision-making process based on dialog and prayer, in which the members of a community reach a unanimous agreement in important matters or subjects regarding the community's life. This is different from voting and from authoritarian decision making.

**Large-group reflection.** Each small group shares the results of its reflection. Someone takes notes on a blackboard or easel with newsprint and makes two lists. The first list should be made up of the most important characteristics of the community model. The second list should show the areas the group would need to concentrate on for the model to work. The facilitator should summarize the presentation and the results of the reflection.