

FFWPU UK: What Some of Our Young Adults Did on the Signature Programme

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Signature is a new one month programme organised by ESGD to help support young adult blessed children as they navigate their lives of faith, with the programme recently ending hear a report on all their activities...

Time in Signature -

by C.M.

Sometimes when we're feeling stuck we need to give ourselves the time and opportunity to live in a space without any preconceptions of who you are. Because despite ostensibly being free to live as I pleased in life, my habits and lifestyle had actually calcified into a very narrow and small kind of living.

On Signature I could reconnect with ways of living that were always inside me, but which I never made the space in my life to grow. Something like waking up early, a cliché aspiration of the self help book consumer, and I completely forgot the genuine bliss that comes from often having the whole world to yourself in the early morning. Going running through the crisp morning air as the sun starts peaking across the sky, it's pretty hard to beat as a start to your day. So time after time I had to humble myself to

the fact that I can't beat wisdom and time tested heuristics. That structure, routine, and good consistent challenge are not burdens that drag you down, but handles to pull yourself up by.



The first part of Signature took part in Obernhof, Germany

Part of the Signature program was doing some service project work for a local group of Greek Orthodox Nuns. As their lifestyle is typically perceived as full of repression and restriction, one way they helped to convey the deep religious purpose they found in this life was to ask the question "When was the first fast?". As a group we tried to answer "Of course there was Jesus but who was before, Elijah, Ester, Moses?", but there was something before even Moses' 40 days and nights. The answer one of the sisters told us, was of course at the very beginning in the Garden of Eden with Adam, Eve and the fruit. I had never thought of the story of Genesis to be in part about the great freedom experienced and peace gained in holding on to a commitment. The Nuns lifestyle was humble, and filled with work and prayer, but there was a real happiness and surprising freedom in how they lived that I felt I could really learn from.

This idea of the 'First Fast' has really stuck with me since. In our lives we have so much choice in how we waste our time, distractions and escapism in every size, shape and flavour. There's all this choice, all these channels and all this "Social Media", but somehow in the end I really don't feel free at all. So it was really refreshing to have this cultural exchange experience with the Nuns, to be able to share our spiritual lives over coffee and then work on repairing a broken wall together as a Signature group.

We were blessed to connect with the nuns in the monastery and offer some help

One of my key takeaways during the Signature program is that in this therapeutic age we've become too sensitive to a certain flavour of personal suffering that once upon a time was called 'learning'.

In life, I had become too attached to a collective learned helplessness, and forgotten just how important and necessary every trip and stumble was in helping me on my own two feet. I had mistaken my flaws as a victimhood identity, rather than trials to rise above. The fact that I wasn't alone in my journey but together in Signature with a group of like-minded adults was inspiring. The culture co-created over time was precious, and something we could have only done together through our willingness to harmonize,

share freely and problem solve.



We travelled the humble way from Germany to UK

Being on Signature brought to the forefront why community is so central to our lives. So much of self-help, personal betterment and financial freedom is a kind of escapism where the end goal is to acquire enough fortune that you no longer need to care about life's challenges and instead can live in a kind of eternal vacation. But that is not why we are still here. We are still here because, despite the many challenges in our community, we haven't forgotten how precious it was in families and a community that cared about faith, God, and lineage. We are still here because we care about building a culture of faith we can pass on, and that can only be done together, only when we are not afraid to look down at issues we face as a community and strive to solve them together.

I can say that attending Signature has changed me, helped me find again where my heart is pointing. The program being an intense month was all the more valuable, as home and life was never so far away. You can really accomplish so much in a day, and I realized that before I would often belittle the time I had. I'd slap narrow labels on my time, of work and distraction and travel, and that it would make a life that felt goalless and grey. But you can make time just as much as you can spend it, and it was brilliant to fight again for a vision of a spiritual life worth living. It's a testimony to what we can accomplish together that we could build this environment in such a short time. I'm proud to have been part of it and I hope that others will be able to experience the Signature programs to come. In this land of confusion we live in, it feels very necessary and for me, time well spent.