

Eleonora's European STF Reflection

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This year has been such a long process of growth for me that I have no idea how to start explaining all the things I could learn.

For me the decision of coming to STF was a way to escape from the reality I was living at home in which I was feeling like if I was losing every connection with God.

I decided to apply just because it was a childhood dream to live for one year with some other blessed children (since I never really had any community), but deep in my heart I also knew that depending on the result of this year I would have taken my decision either to keep or not the standard of the church.

In a certain sense one side of me had this huge expectation to be changed completely but now I see how differently and mysteriously God works. It's true that I feel the same person with still so many limitations but I can say that in the end I found a reason to fight in order to become the best version of myself.

I found out that all second generation, like me, struggle a lot to have this high standard that we inherited from our parents, and since we are all living those difficulties I feel strongly that I want to protect this precious gift. We all have so much to learn and that's why in the end all the struggles are worthy.

In the moment when I thought that I had touched the bottom, in which I felt that my heart was nothing else than a puzzle of broken pieces, I thought that it was over for me, but after I realized the preciousness

of those feelings, because from the greatest challenges I eventually experienced the greatest victories. This is the preciousness of this year so far: there's no defeat until you keep going, until you don't give up there's always a way to get up, stronger.

I'm somehow grateful for the people who slammed the door on my face while fundraising because I could learn to love them (okay, maybe after five or ten minutes), but the most important thing is that I could learn to appreciate people who gave their heart to me, and not get discouraged if people didn't believe in me.

I learned that relationships are more important than an external result and how precious and unique is to have a break through just because you feel loved from your team and from God.

It's true, giving and forgetting that you gave is the biggest challenge ever but I'm grateful that I could learn to love more. I'm so grateful that this year while I was taking the most difficult and important decision of my life of faith, for the first time since long time, God was suddenly a presence beside me and I couldn't feel alone anymore. It took so much time to realize that God loved me even though I felt I didn't deserve it, and I'm grateful that during the pilgrimage through Korea, in Yeosu one man who lived his whole life with True Father told me in such a powerful way how unconditional God's love is. For the first time I cried with the desire of being part of this love, I felt that I could be part of this family and since then I feel the strong desire of protecting this joyful dream of True Parents.

It hasn't been easy but I can say that it was exactly what I needed. I'm grateful that I had the courage to take the decision of coming here, cutting with the friendships that were killing my spirit before STF, and learning how to be myself without fear.