

*This is what an adult thought of Fiat after going for the first time last year:*

Last year was the first time I had ever been to Fiat. I have a unique perspective in that Fiat was something I have heard about since I was a teen, but since I have always felt a tug towards discerning the religious life, I was too scared to go on it as a teenager. Funny how God works ;)

It honestly was not what I expected it to be. I thought it was going to be very in your face "you should become a sister next year," but it was not as "in your face" as I had anticipated. A married couple did come and talk with the girls, so it was a "Discerning your vocation" weekend -- although obviously a little heavier on discerning the religious life. All in all, they did such a great job of letting the girls hang out with the sisters and getting to know them.

I think there were 15-20 orders there throughout the weekend, and they literally just hung out with the girls all weekend. There were talks given by the sisters and they answered questions like: What was their experience discerning pre-seminary? How did you feel called? What was seminary like? What is the daily life of a sister like? What were some things about the religious life that surprised you? We prayed throughout the day with our small groups, had time to talk with the group after each presentation/large group activity. We also had a lot of structured free time where there were options to go on a hike, or to color this giant prayer sheet, or to play corn hole, or sing and play the guitar, or to just talk, roast marshmallows, and one time we had a huge group of girls and sisters singing (and "doing" (?) the Cups song. It was seriously just a fun weekend that allowed the girls to be in a relaxed environment and be among other young women who are trying to answer God's call.

It was, however, not like a discernment "Come and See" retreat/weekend. I have been on a few of those, and each is specific to the order's charisms, and is trying to recruit you to join the community. This was informal, and while the sisters talked about their discernment journey and shared information about their order and what they do, it was much more about realizing these women are normal, joyful, and fun - and there are normal, joyful, and fun women in orders that God might be calling you to. Now if a teen expressed an interest in a particular order, or if they seemed to fit with a charism, sisters would definitely talk with them individually, but it was always very gentle.

I have recommended it to my teens - even those who have not expressed an interest in the religious life. If anything, it is a weekend among like-minded young women, and you get to hang out with sisters!