

Ann Makosinski named to Forbes 30 Under 30 List

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Featured Image:



Leanne Jablonski FMI ? Canada-Wide Science Fair Acceptance Speech ? May 17, 2016

Thank-you so much. Merci beaucoup! I'm delighted to share in the celebration of all your scientific explorations. What a joy to be with my ole science fair buddy Jaymie Matthews! As I strolled through the exhibit hall and talked with many of you, it seems like it was only yesterday that I was in your shoes! Producing science fair backboards has evolved over 40 years. My first display was a card table turned sideways and covered in brown paper - before computers, we hand-lettered them. Like Jaymie and I, you've likely met friends this week who will be lifelong collaborators in furthering science and changing the world - each in our own unique way.

I've been very inspired by Pope Francis's letter to everyone - *Laudato Si - On the Care of Our Common Home*. He calls on EVERYONE to get involved - I quote: section #13 - "The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded." He sees each of you as a vital part of what is needed...In Pope Francis words in #14: "I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all."

You each are unique and passionately dedicated to your research project. You each have a vision for its application to better society. And you each have a special gift to contribute to changing the world. Society talks about best career choices, best University programs; getting the best paying job, and so on. Sometimes an overfocus on these is a bit self-centered if we aren't thinking about how it will impact others? and what is "best" for us. Most of our world's great traditions talk about it being more blessed to give than receive - As Mahatma Gandhi said: "The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others?"

What's vital is paying attention to what's a best match for your gifts... what you feel most passionate and excited about - in dialogue with what needs to be done. Frederich Buechner said: "Vocation is the place where our deep gladness meets the world's deep need" My life as a religious sister, becoming a parent, and being a scientist are all "vocations". "Vocation" is something requiring great dedication - a life's work, mission or purpose...those with a vocation have a strong feeling of suitability for it.

Some parts of vocation comes with our genes - though I'm athletic, I lack ONE critical quality needed to be a great in basketball!

With our gifts comes responsibilities and response. You didn't work on your science project just for top marks in school - a greater calling in you motivated you to dedicate your time and energy, and to make sacrifices in your quest for discovery. You each have a gift and developed talent that not all have- and whether you'll spend your career as a researcher or educator, in science, law, engineering, or another profession you will be applying the creativity and inventiveness you have developed through your science projects to respond to needs. Being here also required some dedication of you, and sacrifice of other activities - we're like Olympic athletes in training - taking time for short-term intense focus to achieve our top performance. Our world needs us to be willing to sacrifice and take some risks for the long-term greater good. All of this is important vocation !

Some of us experience multiple-callings in our lives - two things that appear to be opposed, but stay with us. Some are scientists and artists or musicians; some have gifts in writing, or speaking or teaching others; Some are best as the front-line leaders and others are the best behind the screens as doers rather than talkers. All these talents are needed, and each of us have to live out our vocation as a scientist, an inventor, a researcher, an explorer in our own way. That's what the world needs from us. You also don't need to sacrifice everything to focus on just one thing, if something in you feels a duo vocation. I've been inspired by the book by two great Canadian women, Janet Kestin & Nancy Vonk - *Darling you can't do both?* which encourages creative thinking for women in the workplace - great tips for men too ! Even if you're not quite sure now how your life is going to work out - hold on to your dreams and your vision and what delights you?.and do be patient - If the butterfly emerges out of its cocoon too early, its wings won't be formed and able to fly. And maybe your ?dream career? or place where you feel totally you - doesn't quite exist yet...that was certainly true for me. I needed to patiently wait till the moments emerged for bridging between science and religion.

Also don't be afraid to follow your quest away from your hometown or nation. Many of our ancestors left home to come to this new land. The world does need more of Canada's gifts. Our great spirit of collaboration and plurality, multi-cultural richness, friendly outreach and of course, science excellence! Developing fluency in multiple languages increases our capacities! I never planned to leave Canada- but love (of the great Lover of Life) impelled me and I've discovered a new home with my Marianist Sisters in Ohio and our community visioning in service together - celebrating and empowering each one's unique gifts. I wasn't always sure I'd continue my path as a scientist - I took a gap year after my undergrad degree in Manitoba to do a year of service...and gap years in-between each of my 3 science degrees to explore and develop other facets of me. It's made me a better scientist, educator and communicator. As a specialized generalist - with graduate degrees in both ecology and religious studies, I've been able to build bridges and provide the science background that people of many faith and cultural traditions have needed to fully understand the moral background and environmental justice dimensions of their tradition. Life can work out! if we follow our path!

Awards are being announced today - but you know you're all already winners ! Sometimes its overwhelming to be at the Canada-wide and to look at everyone else's projects and compare yourself to them. Don't ever be discouragement or do negative comparisons. Learn from each other - and take inspiration for next steps. At professional science meetings, we're always ?in process? and sharing ideas. I was so impressed by conversations with many of you - your articulation, passion and openness...you make the complex science understandable? and you love the process.

So, I encourage you to go forth from here and ?be the change you want to see in the world? by taking leadership together and responding to needs and opportunities - to mentor your fellow students...to educate adults through your media stories, communicating with legislators and applying what you've discovered! A group of us Canada Wide Science Fair participants who lived in Manitoba and nearby Provinces designed summer jobs - a Eco-nat Discovery summer science experience for youth and received government funding. Another group of us helped form a National Students Science Council movement so we could engage and communicate together via mail and phone calls after/between the science fairs (This was WAY before computers and smartphones!). Paraphrasing Margaret Mead: ?Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, caring, committed people can change the world; That's all who ever have.?

In conclusion - in the spirit of your shared talents last night and the dinner and dance we'll enjoy tonight: I share some of Pope Francis words of encouragement as he concluded his encyclical (#244)? ?Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.? May we all keep singing and dancing the song of science and keep changing Canada AND indeed - the world !

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