



## **Natasha Milavec: a Catholic Leader In the present and the future!**

### **What have you accomplished in the past two years?**

Being a student campus minister in second year was great for faith formation. I was always Catholic but I learned more and deepened my faith. When I was an SCM, I also had the role of spiritual affairs director for the Newman Catholic Students Club (NCSC), and brought in Nightfever (an evening of adoration and inviting people in off the street to spend some time in prayer...it started in Germany and has since spread around the world), and led a consecration to Mary group. Being at Newman led to learning about and working with Campaign Life Coalition as a student intern and was a great experience to see the prolife community in action and apply my faith to a social justice context. I led faith studies at Newman in my third year and spent time preparing for my trip to Bosnia. This year I'm also on the NCSC executive in the role of sports and social coordinator. It's helped me to try expanding my leadership skills and practice skills that are uncomfortable to me at first, but evangelizing people through fun and joy in a more indirect way has helped me learn a lot. I was also recently elected to represent central Canada for the Canadian Catholic Students Association national organization that promotes campus ministry across Canada.

### **What drives you to accomplish this success?**

The Holy Spirit primarily, but also to see God known and loved. This was Catherine Dougherty's desire, and I respect her and read her writings and share this desire. Many people think God is a dictator etc, but I desire people to know the truth about His love for them.

### **How you want to use and continue these accomplishments?**

I've always had a love for Catholic education, so I see myself working in that in some capacity because it's the most natural way to evangelize. The church has always been a proponent of nourishing both intellect and soul. We need to take advantage of this, and I'd love to be able to contribute to this in some way. It might mean a master's degree in the future, possibly. Cardinal Newman, in the past year especially, has contributed to my understanding of the role of faith and education. At CCSA I got to share the role of faith and reason with other students, and what the church teaches, and this helped me to understand it better and understand that God is reasonable, and that he created reason. Our faith is not opposed to reason, and it's made me a better evangelizer and a better Catholic. His vision of a Catholic university is something I relate to because he talks about it not being only intellectual formation, but spiritual as well. Even if I left Newman not learning anything (which is not true, because I've learned a lot!) I still would have grown a lot in my faith, so it's been a blessing to be able to grow while here.



### **In your opinion, what makes you become a Catholic Leader?**

People become good Catholic leaders by praying for courage, and to be guided by the Holy Spirit, because Jesus said, "you can do nothing without me". It always starts from a firm foundation of prayer and faith formation, followed by having opportunities to act on what you've been rooted in,

and having courage to share your faith. It doesn't become a question anymore about whether to share your faith, it just becomes a love so strong that it's impossible not to share. It takes a leader to be in love with their faith. Having the courage to listen is also important, because we are servant leaders who listen to people in order to respond to their needs and to help them grow and see where we need to be able to grow ourselves.



### **What have you seen or encountered when you were in Bosnia?**

Particularly challenging was the knowledge that Bosniacs are Muslim and Croats are Catholic...this identity is so distinct that it was hard to understand this division coming from Toronto where people of different faiths interact on a frequent basis. Seeing the difficulty of Bosniacs who want to be Catholic (a very frowned-upon thing) was hard, and

being a presence there of witness of the universal church was important. Every day I also got to share my faith with all of the very faithful Muslims who live there and build relationships with them...I shared Eid (the end of Ramadan) with them and that gave flesh to what interreligious dialogue is all about. I was working at a preschool center to expose kids from both sides of the town to each other and to help them learn how to maintain peace, and it was neat to be able to see how kids around the world are all the same with similar desires and needs...I was humbled by the kids every day and learned from them every day.

### **How have you utilized your leadership skills in your new roles this year?**

Both roles (NCSC Executive and CCSA Executive) are similar in the sense that they call me to be a Catholic leader, but in different spheres within the Church in Canada. The same skills apply: coming at it first from prayer and seeing where the Holy Spirit is leading me individually and us as a team, seeking to understand the needs of those around me and in my role respond to them, and being open to new ideas are important skills I have used and will continue to use. As long as we're willing to work hard and do what God is calling us to do, that's the main point.

### **What will you do to be a Catholic Leader in the future?**

In the future, I'll continue along the same path, and be open to learning from other people. I've experienced a lot of growth from the Catholic conferences I've been able to go to, and hearing speakers and taking away their wisdom has been very helpful in my leadership formation. I will always continue learning.

### **How has the Newman Centre helped you in becoming a Catholic Leader?**

The best part of Newman is being supported and formed, and also challenged by your peers. When dealing with an issue (a professor in class speaking disparagingly about the faith, or how to share the faith with a friend) you can be supported in that and get advice from other members of the community. Having the community is absolutely priceless...I don't know what I would do without it! You're always challenged to do more to grow and change and become a better Catholic, ultimately.

