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New York TV news anchor talks of life off-camera

by Sr. Camille D'Arienzo

Conversations with Sr. Camille

Rosanna Scotto, co-anchor of Fox 5's "Good Day New York," is one of New York's favorite reporters. She's been honored many times for her professionalism, and loyal viewers find her cordial and gracious. I spent some time talking to Rosanna about her life away from the camera, especially in terms of devotion to family and the impact of its traditions upon her.



Sr. Camille: Let's begin by recalling what it was like to

grow up in an Italian-American family.

Scotto: I was fortunate to have a very close-knit family. My parents, Anthony and Marion Scotto, always encouraged us to look out for one another. As the eldest child, I felt that responsibility with my brothers,

Anthony and John, and my baby sister, Elaina. Of course, we had our sibling rivalry, but we always had each other's backs.

Where did you spend your childhood?

Growing up in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn, was great. We knew our neighbors. We'd play hide and seek at each other's homes, and just by sniffing the aromas wafting into the street, we knew what our friend's mother was making for dinner. On Sunday, my best friend, Roseanne, would walk with me to St. Bernadette's Church. After Mass, we'd go to Artie's for an egg cream, then home for 2 o'clock Sunday dinner with pasta and meatballs.

You're making me hungry! Where did you go to school?

I got a great education at Visitation Academy, a strict Catholic elementary school in Bay Ridge. The nuns were cloistered, which meant my parents only saw them behind a black screen. Inside school, we saw the nuns. They were nurturing, but no-nonsense. Then it was off to Packer Collegiate Institute and Catholic University. Not only did I learn a lot at CU, but I also met my husband, Louis Ruggiero, there.

Did you have a particular role model?

Rose Ann Scamardella. When I was growing up, we'd all watch her on ABC's "Eyewitness News." Rose Ann also happened to be a friend of my family's. I'd visit her at the TV studio, where she'd have me talk to some of the other reporters and anchors, like the respected Ernie Anastos.

Are your parents influential in your life?

My parents are very strong role models -- always involved in what I'm doing, encouraging when I'm disappointed and driving all of us to give back to the community because we have so much to be grateful for. I'm glad to say they have a strong influence on my children as well.

How would you describe your husband?

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He's very supportive of my demanding career. Together, we try to raise our two children, Jenna and LJ, with the same old-fashioned values we grew up with. Our kids attended Catholic grammar school because we wanted to make sure they had a strong foundation.

When did you first feel an attraction to the career that seems such an easy fit for you?

My love for TV news started when I was in high school. In college, I interned at ABC-TV news and realized that this was the career I would follow.

Please tell us about your co-anchor, Greg Kelly.

Greg and I were partnered three years ago. I really didn't know too much about him at the time. I soon learned that he's a Marine, and spent time in D.C. as a White House correspondent.

We couldn't be more different. He's book smart, has an uncanny memory and is a bachelor. I'm street smart, am losing my memory and love to talk about my husband and two children. Together, we

complement one another. And every day, we surprise each other with where our conversations go, on and off the air. While I may feign exasperation with some of his comments, he always makes me laugh. It's great fun working with him.

Reporters have to describe a great deal of the underside of life. How do you hold onto faith in humanity under so much stress?

We deal with so much bad news in this job. Sometimes it weighs really heavy. But I've also met so many incredible people who give so much of themselves. It gives me great hope to find so much good in the world.

Has any particular story had a significant impact on you?

The tragedy of 9/11 is something I carry with me. I was on the air for many hours, for many days. I lost some friends on that day. It's bittersweet to see how their children have grown into such wonderful people.

Does your faith in God affect your work?

My faith is my foundation. It is who I am. I try to be a good role model and give back to my community.

What is your image of God?

My image is of a loving and forgiving God.

Has this changed over time?

I think I was more fearful of God as a child.

Do you have a favorite scripture passage?

Psalm 19:14. "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."

Why does this hold appeal?

I realize what I say on TV can have an impact on someone else's life, or, perhaps, their family's. I weigh my words, trying to be fair.

How do you pray?

Before I go to sleep, and when I awake, I give thanks.

What do you consider your personal accomplishments?

These are still a work in progress. A major goal is giving my children a healthy and happy home and encouraging them to find a purpose for their lives. I hope they'll be happy. That's such an overused word, but I long for the true meaning of happiness ... that they'll be joyful, peaceful and blessed.

What makes you happy?

I'm happiest when I'm with my family, making dinner.

Cooking and serving delicious food is part of your heritage. Please say something about the family's restaurants.

Eighteen and a half years ago my mother, with the urging of my brothers, decided to open up a family restaurant. Fresco by Scotto is like an extension of our home.

You can always find my mother, Marion Scotto, welcoming our customers. My brother Anthony keeps things running smoothly in the dining room.

And Elaina is in charge of our Fresco on the Go on 52st and Pearl Street locations. Our food can be found at Legends at Yankee stadium. And we are now undertaking the catering backstage at Jones Beach. Fresco is fun for me because I don't have to deal with the daily headaches. I call myself the president of schmoozing. I come into the restaurant and talk to everyone and then get to eat a delicious meal. My kids have wanted to work there in the summers. Fresco is our gathering place.

What do you consider your treasures?

I'm so thankful that I have a wonderful family and a job that keeps me challenged.

Do you have an unfulfilled dream?

I'm trying my hardest to get my mother, brothers and sister a cooking show. I am not giving up.

[Mercy Sr. Camille D'Arienzo, broadcaster and author, has written a soon-to-be-published book titled *Stories of Forgiveness*.]

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