

# Coffee & Doughnuts with Marylou Yam

*Marylou Yam, president of Notre Dame of Maryland University, sits down with the Catholic Review.*

**CR: What, and where are your Catholic roots?**

Yam: I was born into a strong Catholic heritage. Growing up in New York, in the Bronx, my family was a member of Blessed Sacrament Parish, where my first memories were formed about the amazing joy that comes with celebrating the Eucharist. My mother, Alma, was devout to her faith and family, and my Aunt Nancy talked of her strong relationship with God. How they practiced their faith inspired me. I attended Blessed Sacrament Elementary School and was taught by the Sisters of Charity of New York. I consider myself blessed to attend Sunday Mass on campus at the Marickle Chapel with our students.

**CR: Why did domestic violence and care for battered women become a focus of your nursing studies?**

Yam: Before entering academia, I was a registered nurse. Caring for women who were abused, I observed their need to be empowered to break the cycle of violence in their lives, which includes recognition, education and support. Knowing about that support and resources gives them strength. For starters, many women need a safe place to go for protection to get out of their immediate abusive situation. I continued my work in violence against women as a doctoral student and in subsequent years a nurse researcher.

**CR: Counting 25 years at St. Peter's University (in Jersey City, N.J.), you've spent 30 years in Catholic higher education. What is its appeal?**

Yam: It is value-based. Its mission prioritizes excellence in academics but also commits to educating the whole person, recognizes the value of human dignity and promotes social responsibility. Those are vital components when we talk about being a positive force in the formation of the next generation of leaders. The Catholic mission gives meaning to my work; it's the reason for my long-time professional commitment.

**CR: What's behind NDMU being the first Maryland college granted non-governmental organization status by the United Nations?**

Yam: Founded by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the mission of NDMU is to educate leaders to transform the world. In addition, one of the goals of our new strategic plan, "Inspired by Tradition, The Path to Transformation," was to expand

our partnerships – local to global. Several of the programs and activities that NDMU students and faculty engage in are congruent with the work of the UN. We are honored and excited about this designation. Our NDMU students are invited to briefings and programs at the UN and learn about global issues on an international stage.

**CR: In this era, why a need for single-gender colleges?**

Yam: There is still much work to do with regard to gender equity. Inequities still exist and women are under-represented in many areas, including pay grade and representation in government. Those who graduate from women's colleges are more than twice as likely to receive doctoral degrees, particularly in the life sciences, and are more likely to pursue majors such as economics, math and life sciences. Single-gender colleges provide a very specific support to students in recognizing their needs for success.

Notre Dame is also dedicated to educating men. Our adult undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs, including our School of Pharmacy, are co-educational.

**CR: Favorite saint?**

Yam: St. Catherine of Siena, born in Italy during the 14th century. She is the patroness of nurses.

*Also see:*

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