

# AL ROKER INSULTS NUNS; GETS GREASED BY FLO HENDERSON

The “Today” show weatherman, Al Roker, made the rounds on talk TV shows in June promoting his new book. Unfortunately, every chance he got he told an insulting joke about nuns. That drew the ire of the Catholic League and a flurry of media interest. Things got worse when “Later Today” show host Florence Henderson asked Roker about our complaint, greasing her friend by misrepresenting our position. Once again, we jumped into the fray. Here’s what happened.

Roker’s book, *Don’t Make Me Stop This Car*, is about fatherhood. In the course of his TV interviews, Roker repeatedly told a story about his wife’s use of a fertility drug, perganol, making the claim that the drug is made by a company that is a subsidiary of the Vatican. Roker contends that perganol is extracted from a hormone, FHS, which itself is obtained from the urine of “menopausal nuns” who live in the Vatican. As he told Larry King on June 16, the drug is “expensive stuff,” adding that “it was cheaper to adopt a nun, you know, and just have her pee in a cup.”

When Roker appeared with Tim Russert on CNBC and with Regis and Kathy Lee on ABC, he made similar comments. And when he appeared on “Late Night with Conan O’Brien,” he told the same tale, saying that it would have made more sense to get Sister Bertrille of “The Flying Nun” to go into the lab and urinate.

William Donohue immediately took after Roker by issuing the following statement to the press:

“Not that it makes any difference, but for the record, the Vatican sold its shares in Serono, the fertility-drug maker, in 1970; the company collected urine samples from 110,000 postmenopausal women volunteers in Italy, Spain, Brazil and

Argentina.

“But what matters is not historical accuracy, it is the coarseness of Al Roker’s brand of humor. He just can’t wait to tell everyone his little story how it would be cheaper to adopt a nun and have her pee in a cup. How much it would cost to rent a slave, he does not say. And with good reason: it might hit home. Perhaps Mr. Roker would benefit from a course in diversity run by the Catholic League, but unfortunately we’re too busy dealing with anti-Catholic bigots to have such a luxury.”

The Catholic League’s reaction garnered the front page of the June 22 edition of the New York *Daily News*, and was cited in the *Washington Post* and other media outlets. Then we got word that Roker was to be interviewed by Florence Henderson on “Later Today”; Msgr. Michael Wrenn, pastor St. John the Evangelist, had given Henderson a copy of our news release when he spotted her in a New York restaurant.

On the show, which aired June 23, Henderson mentioned how Roker’s wife had trouble getting pregnant but that she succeeded “through the urine of postmenopausal women.” She then offered, “you got in a little bit of trouble with the Catholic League because of it. Would you just speak about that, because I know you would never, never mean to be offensive?” Roker’s easy response drew applause from the audience.

Donohue answered Henderson with the following remarks:

“If anyone at NBC wants to know why so many Americans are distrustful of the media, they should look at the Henderson-Roker clip. How cute it was to have a star from the ‘Today’ show questioned by a star from ‘Later Today’ about an offensive joke he has told about nuns, without ever repeating the joke. Worse, Henderson never said that it was nuns who were the butt of Roker’s insult humor. Some might call this

spin. I call it deceit. It might even qualify as incest."

You can write to Roker at the "Today" show and to Henderson at "Later Today" at the same address: 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, New York 10112.