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Vatican newspaper has praise for Potter film

by Cindy Wooden by Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY -- The Vatican newspaper gave the new Harry Potter movie four stars for promoting "friendship, altruism, loyalty and self-giving."

As "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" was set to open worldwide July 15, *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, once again downplayed concerns that the film and book series by J.K. Rowling promote magic and witchcraft.

"Certainly, Rowling's vision lacks a reference to transcendence, to a providential design in which people live their personal histories and history itself takes shape," the paper said in its July 14 edition.

But, it said, the new film and the books make clear "the line of demarcation between one who does good and one who does evil, and it is not difficult for the reader or the viewer to identify with the first."

"This is particularly true in the latest film," the review said. "They know that doing good is the right thing to do. And they also understand that sometimes this involves hard work and sacrifice."

The magic in Harry Potter is similar to the magic found "in classic fairy tales," it said.

When the book is finished or the film credits roll, what is remembered are "the values of friendship, altruism, loyalty and self-giving" rather than the magic tricks, the newspaper said.

L'Osservatore said the film "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," the sixth Harry Potter film, is the best adaptation so far.

"As the characters -- now adolescents on the threshold of adulthood -- have grown, the tone of the story has as well and the film benefits," it said.

The Vatican newspaper said the fact that the teen stars are starting to experience a bit of romance, "with the right balance, makes them more credible" because "they are called to face the same problems as their 'Muggle' peers." In the Harry Potter series "Muggles" are people not endowed with magical powers.

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