

Vatican newspaper says Harry Potter film champions values

VATICAN CITY – The last battle of the almost-grownup Harry Potter may be too scary for young viewers, but it champions the values of friendship and sacrifice, the Vatican newspaper said.

“The atmosphere of the last few episodes, which had become increasingly dark and ominous, reaches its pinnacle,” said one of two reviews of “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2” printed July 12 in the Vatican newspaper, L’Osservatore Romano.

The darkness “may disturb younger audiences,” said reviewer Gaetano Vallini.

“Death, which was a rare occurrence (in the previous Harry Potter films) is the protagonist here,” which is another reason the film may not be appropriate for everyone, he said.

“As for the content, evil is never presented as fascinating or attractive in the saga, but the values of friendship and of sacrifice are highlighted. In a unique and long story of formation, through painful passages of dealing with death and loss, the hero and his companions mature from the lightheartedness of infancy to the complex reality of adulthood,” he said.

Young people introduced to Harry Potter through the seven books by J.K. Rowling and the films based on them have grown with Potter and his friends, Vallini said, “and they certainly have understood that magic is only a narrative pretext useful in the battle against an unrealistic search for immortality.”

In the second review, Antonio Carrierio reaffirmed one point Vatican reviewers have made since the Harry Potter books first appeared in Italian: The story captured the imagination of millions of children around the world and got them reading books.

And, he said, the saga championed values that Christians and non-Christians share and provided opportunities for Christian parents to talk to their children about how

those values are presented in a special way in the Bible.

Potter's archenemy, Lord Voldemort, "does not represent Satan, as it would be easy to think, but is a man who has made bad choices in his life," Carriero said.

Voldemort has chosen not to love others and sees himself as the center of the universe, he said.

Carriero said Voldemort is like many modern men and women who think they can do without God and without others, they don't believe in heaven, and yet they are the most frightened of dying.

"Eternal life is reached through death, not without it. And Harry Potter, although he never declared himself a Christian, calls on the dark magician to mend his ways, repent for what he has done and recognize the primacy of love over everything so he will not be damned for eternity," he wrote.

The "Deathly Hallows" demonstrates that "from the pure of heart like the young Harry, ready to die for his friends," come big lessons, Carriero wrote.

The film also teaches that "it's possible to change the world. It is Harry, with his inseparable friends, who demonstrates that it is possible to vanquish evil and establish peace. Power, success and an easy life do not bring the truest and deepest joys. For that we need friendship, self-giving, sacrifice and attachment to a truth that is not formed in man's image," the review said.