

What if the pope was overwhelmed by his job?

[youtube=<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeO1Wnvv-1s>]

A film about a newly elected pope overwhelmed by his responsibilities is a hit in Italy, but drawing a mixed response from Catholic leaders.

The Associated Press has the story:

Director Nanni Moretti's movie about a panic-stricken pope who can't cope with the enormity of his task is a hit across Italy. Within the Catholic Church, the film has drawn some criticism, though not the anathema that "The Da Vinci Code" has incurred, and even a little praise.

"Habemus Papam" — Latin for "We Have a Pope," the expression with which the election of a pontiff is announced to the world — opened April 15 to a strong showing at the Italian box office. The movie will be shown in competition at the Cannes Film Festival next month.

Avvenire, the influential newspaper of the Italian Catholic bishops' conference, printed a letter by a Vatican expert last week calling for a boycott of the movie, saying "hands off the pope" and asking readers "Why should we finance those who offend our religion?"

But no such call has come from Vatican officials. And Avvenire itself said in its own review that the film is well-made and clever, though it faults Moretti for representing "the death of an old and confused church" and missing the crucial point of the church's faith and communion with Christ.

Some Catholic commentators praised Moretti for offering a humane portrayal of a troubled pope, played by the 85-year-old French actor Michel Piccoli.

"There's no sarcasm, no caricature," wrote Vatican Radio.

The movie opens with scenes of a papal funeral — including footage from the real

funeral of John Paul II in 2005 — and subsequent conclave. Upon his election as pontiff, the cardinal played by Piccoli panics, shouting desperately and running away as soon as the words “Habemus Papam” are pronounced from a St. Peter’s balcony to an awaiting crowd.

“A quality is seen in me which I don’t possess,” the pope tells a psychoanalyst, played by Moretti, who is brought inside the Vatican to help the paralyzed pontiff. “I can’t do it!” he screams at another point, under mounting pressure. Before long, the pope, whose identity is not yet public, escapes the Vatican and starts roaming the streets of Rome looking for answers.

Much more here.