

## Revisiting the question regarding Harry Potter:

Two weeks ago I responded to a question on Halloween costumes and Harry Potter. That article sparked a concerned response from a parent regarding my somewhat cavalier attitude about the Harry Potter series of books. I expressed my personal opinion, but should have researched more deeply into the opinions of others with more authority.

With regard to the Harry Potter movies, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has rated all of the Harry Potter movies as A-II, acceptable for adolescents and adults. They are not recommended for young children because of violence and intensity, not because of issues of magic. But just because the movies are okay, does not mean that the books are also okay.

In 2003 Fr. Peter Fleetwood, a Vatican official, expressed his personal opinion about Harry Potter. His favorable comments caused a great uproar in the media. They reported his opinion as an official Vatican position, which it was not. He said: "*Harry Potter* does not represent a problem." And that "in each one's childhood there have been fairy godmothers, magicians, angels and witches, which are not bad things but a help for children to understand the conflict between good and evil." There are opinions from other Vatican officials, however, which have not been as greatly reported.

Father Gabriele Amorth, the Vatican's chief exorcist, has weighed in on the matter. He said: "By reading *Harry Potter* a young child will be drawn into magic and from there it is a simple step to Satanism and the Devil." And also: "You start with Harry Potter, who comes across as a likeable wizard, but you end up with the Devil. There is no doubt that the signature of the Prince of Darkness is clearly within these books."

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, before he became Pope Benedict XVI, also commented about Harry Potter. In a letter to a Harry Potter critic, he said: "It is good, that you enlighten people about *Harry Potter*, because those are subtle seductions, which act unnoticed and by this deeply distort Christianity in the soul, before it can grow properly."

There is a fictional report floating about on the internet that J. K. Rowlings is a Satanist. While this does not appear to be true, her desire to clearly present her Christian values, and to look out for the best interest of children, can be called into question. Her recent announcement (made since I wrote my first article) that one of the main characters of the series is a homosexual, clearly indicates an agenda opposed to Christian values.

Should the Harry Potter books be completely avoided? Should they be restricted, with parental involvement, to mature teens whose souls have grown properly and are resistant to distortions of Christianity? Ultimately, these are decisions for parents to make for their children. Hopefully, I have given you a more balanced and authoritative response for your consideration.

**Deacon Joe**