



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on September 6, 2019

Catholic School Removes “Harry Potter” Books Over Witchcraft Concerns

Taking seriously his responsibility for the Christian formation of the children under his shepherding, a priest serving at a Catholic school in Nashville has ordered the removal of all seven installments of the “Harry Potter” novel series, citing the portrayal of witchcraft and magic in the stories.

As reported by Nashville’s *Tennessean* newspaper, while the bestselling book series by British children’s author J.K. Rowling were available for students to read at the previous library of Nashville’s St. Edward Catholic School, when a new library was opened the books were removed out of concern that their content centered on magic and witchcraft, and might negatively impact students.



In an e-mail explaining the action, the Rev. Dan Reehil, a priest serving the Roman Catholic parish school, wrote that the books “present magic as both good and evil, which is not true, but in fact a clever deception. The curses and spells used in the books are actual curses and spells, which when read by a human being risk conjuring evil spirits into the presence of the person reading the text.”

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He added that “I have consulted several exorcists, both in the United States and in Rome, and they have recommended removing the books from circulation.”

The Catholic priest expressed concern that the books “glorify acts of divination, of conjuring the dead, of casting spells among other acts that are an offense to the virtue of religion — to the love and respect we owe to God alone. Many reading these books could be persuaded to believe these acts are perfectly fine, even good or spiritually healthy.”

Reehill emphasized that “St. Edward is committed to advancing the Catholic faith and teaching the standards of sound doctrine to instill strong Catholic moral values. Books and other materials which present a possible threat to our faith will not be promoted by our church or school.”

Published between 1997 and 2007, the “Harry Potter” books have been wildly popular among children and young people and even spawned a successful movie series. And while they have been hailed by many educational experts for their power to engage the imaginations of children, they have been rejected by many Christian leaders for their portrayal of magic and witchcraft — which are in conflict with biblical Christianity — as harmless, exciting, and even empowering to children.

Rebecca Hammel, superintendent of schools for the Catholic Diocese of Nashville, told the *Tennessean* that the Nashville Catholic diocese does not have an official position on the “Harry Potter” novels.



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“Each pastor has canonical authority to make such decisions for his parish school,” she said, adding that the Rev. Reehil was “well within his authority” to have the books removed from the school library. Hammel advised that if parents whose children attend St. Edward Catholic School want their students to have access to “Harry Potter” books, “we would hope that they would just guide their sons and daughters to understand the content through the lens of our faith.” She said that the school does not “get into censorship in such selections other than making sure that what we put in our school libraries is age appropriate materials for our classrooms.”

The Rev. Reehill is certainly not the first Christian (or other) leader to raise a red flag over the Harry Potter series. In 2015 the [Charlotte Observer](#) reported that Samaritan’s Purse, overseen by the Rev. Franklin Graham, would not allow “Harry Potter” books to be included in the “Operation Christmas Child” gift boxes sent to needy children around the world.

And *Newsweek* reported that a memoir by President George W. Bush recalled that the Bush administration had “denied Rowling a presidential medal of freedom because they felt the Harry Potter books ‘encouraged witchcraft.’”

While not overtly condemning the Harry Potter books, [GotQuestions.org](#), a website that offers answers to queries on the Bible and Christianity from an evangelical perspective, offers that “unlike other fantasy children’s stories that contain witches and the like, such as C. S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the Harry Potter books do not have a positive biblical worldview. The distinction between good and bad can become blurred as both the ‘good’ and ‘evil’ characters participate in different types witchcraft and magic.”

The website goes on to specify that the Bible “clearly condemns all kinds of witchcraft, sorcery and spiritism (Deuteronomy 18:10-11). Philippians 4:8 says to ‘fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable.’”

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