

# Vatican daily proclaims Michael Jackson immortal - for his fans

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It's not every day that the Vatican newspaper suggests that a man accused of paedophilia and said to have converted to Islam might be immortal. But that's what *L'Osservatore Romano* did today. In a tribute to Michael Jackson — itself another sign of the “new look” that editor-in-chief Giovanni Maria Vian has given it — the paper included him in a pop music heaven at an unusually earthly location:

*“But will he really be dead? It wouldn't be surprising if, in a few years, he was spotted in a gas station in Memphis, perhaps with his former father-in-law Elvis Presley, another of those myths - like Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix or John Lennon - that never die in the imagination of their fans. And Michael Jackson, who died yesterday at the age of fifty, is definitely a pop music legend.”*

The tribute reviews Jackson's career, from the time “when he was still black” through his “humanly difficult ... crossover” to “new genres not entirely attributable to any specific area, where one cannot distinguish between black and white.” It praises his mega-album *Thriller* “which is known also to those who do not frequent these musical worlds” and calls him a “great dancer” (*grande ballerino*).



The article ends on the delicate issue of accusations of paedophilia, a cloud that hung over Jackson's later years and has dogged the Catholic Church as well. The singer hit his artistic peak with *Thriller*, it said, but always stayed enormously popular. “Not always, unfortunately, for artistic reasons,” it wrote. “His judicial ups and downs following allegations of paedophilia are well known. But no charge, even as bad and shameful, was sufficient to diminish his legend among the millions of fans around the world. The proof of the emotional reactions aroused by the news of his death. News many don't believe. Maybe someone in Memphis has already seen him.”

(Photo: Michael Jackson in Munich, 9 June 1999/Michael Kappeler)

<http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2009/06/26/vatican-daily-proclaims-michael-jackson-immortal-for-his-fans/>