

*This newsletter is a little different from what you are used to, but I wanted to take the time to make a personal comment on a movie about to be released.*

## aboutTHEmovie**ORPHAN**

Some of you may have heard about the movie “Orphan”, opening in theatres on July 24. This movie from Warner Brothers fits squarely in the horror genre. I was about to ignore the trailer for it when a friend who works with foster care and adoption for a state department of human services pointed it out to me, because of being concerned about it. So I took a look at the trailer.

Now I do enjoy a good thriller and suspense in a movie is generally a good thing. But horror movies just don’t do much for me — and I know professional movie reviewers who just won’t go there. All too often horror movies are built around a very simple premise: how much fake movie blood can we use up in the next 90 or so minutes, and what new and inventive ways can we find to use ordinary items to dismember people.

In the case of Orphan, going by the trailer, we have a couple who visit an orphanage looking for a child to adopt and are shown Esther, an older child who is explained to be “special.” We don’t find out just how special until she is in this couple’s home and first strange things and then increasingly evil things happen to the family.

What I found interesting about the scenes shown in the trailer, is that we see this couple asking the right questions, trying to get background information about Esther, and who appear to be genuinely making every effort for Esther to fit into their family. For the first half of the trailer, this could almost be scenes from a film about an adoption where we will follow the family through their adjustments and in the end see a happy ending.

But there is apparently no happy ending for Esther. As near as I can tell, the story line is not particularly unique: It seems to follow the formula of a (happy) family that gains a child (by birth, adoption, foster care, visitor) and then we find out that this innocent looking child is really the devil incarnate. Many other horror movies have used the same basic premise. “The Omen” and “Poltergeist” come to mind.

So what’s the deal with “Orphan”? Well, I probably wouldn’t be writing this, if it was called something like “There’s something about Esther” or “Esther finds a new home.” What stands out to me is the title “Orphan.”

There are around 145 million orphans world-wide. And while there’s been a reluctance in recent years to use the term “orphan” about children in the US (or other Western countries), we have orphans too. All too many of those orphans will never experience what it means to grow up in a family that loves them and cares for them.

For many couples the thought of bringing a strange child into their home and family is, well a bit scary. What if ... ? That is probably why there are so many people who want to adopt newborns, and not as many who are willing to take in an older child. After all, that newborn child is a tabula erasa, ready to be raised and nurtured and formed, and an older child comes with “baggage”.

Much information and education by state agencies and non-profit groups goes into finding adoptive parents for those older children. It can be a slow, long process of knocking down perceived barriers. Then along comes a movie like “Orphan” and those barriers go up again, even for some people who never will see the movie. Just hearing about it is enough to raise fear and doubt.

I know some would argue that this is “only a movie” and not real life. Yes, I can tell the difference. However, I also remember when “Jaws” came out in theatres back in 1975, and people really did stay away from the beaches because of the movie. It is well established that movies do influence

their viewers (After all, if they didn't in any way influence us, would we really continue watching? Didn't think so.)

My concern, and I share that with many who work with adoption, is that a movie like "Orphan" will make the task of finding forever homes for children who so very much need them all that much harder. And that is a horror.

If you think that Orphans are just scary and can't amount to anything, consider one Stephen Paul Jobs. Yes, the one of Apple fame. He was adopted.

You may also remember Dave Thomas, the founder of Wendy's, the chain of fast food restaurants. Not only was he adopted, but he became a lifelong advocate for adoption.

For a list of other people in history who were orphans and "made good," visit

<http://thirdworldorphans.org/gpage.html34.html>

Getting back to that movie coming out. What can you do?

**Please take a moment to visit <http://orphansdeservebetter.org> to learn more and get involved in helping the kids.**



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