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THIS WEEK IN ORPHANED BUTTERCUPS

THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S AND BOYS' TOWN

Nothing rallies the holiday spirit quite like crying over orphans and neglected children. While there aren't any orphanages anymore—the kids all now live in foster care now, where they can be beaten privately, rather than in front of a classroom by a nun—in our nation's past, orphans were the darlings of cinema, romanced and sanitized and treated like little buttercups. This week, Turner Classic Movies has a double dose of this weepy melodrama for you, so get out your hankies.



Start off with 1945's *The Bells of St. Mary's*, a severely socialist and gender-dated tale of a neglected girl whose fate lies in the hands of Ingrid Bergman and Bing Crosby. As Sister Superior, Bergman is so damn charming—and gorgeous sans war paint—you can actually bear the tripe surrounding her. (Especially hilarious is Swedish sexpot Bergman in full nun regalia teaching a youngster how to box.) Crosby, as Father O'Malley, looks terrific and sings a bit, reminding us of the sheer beauty of his pipes. They're all trying to save the run-down St. Mary's school from demolition, which is superboring. And the neglected child bit is not only more boring, but kinda creepy, too, with little Patsy's straying mother droning on at length about her sordid past to a seemingly equally creeped-out Crosby. Fun fact: note the Pledge of Allegiance recited by church kids without saying "under God"—and see them not go to hell!

Boys' Town (1938) with Spencer Tracy and Mickey Rooney is way more about orphans. Scripted in part by Dore Schary (of *I Love Lucy* fame), *Town* is a liberal testament to leaving no child behind that makes you realize what self-centered bastards we've really all become. And you want to talk about a big boo-hoo? Christ almighty! Rooney, who is usually beyond annoying, blubbers so much in this true-life tale of Father Flannagan (Tracy), a priest

who rehabilitates hundreds of abandoned boys, you'd have to be a blarney stone not to eek out a tear.

See how good you've really got it—unless you're in foster care—on Turner Classic Movies; www.turnerclassicmovies.com. Sun., 5 p.m.

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