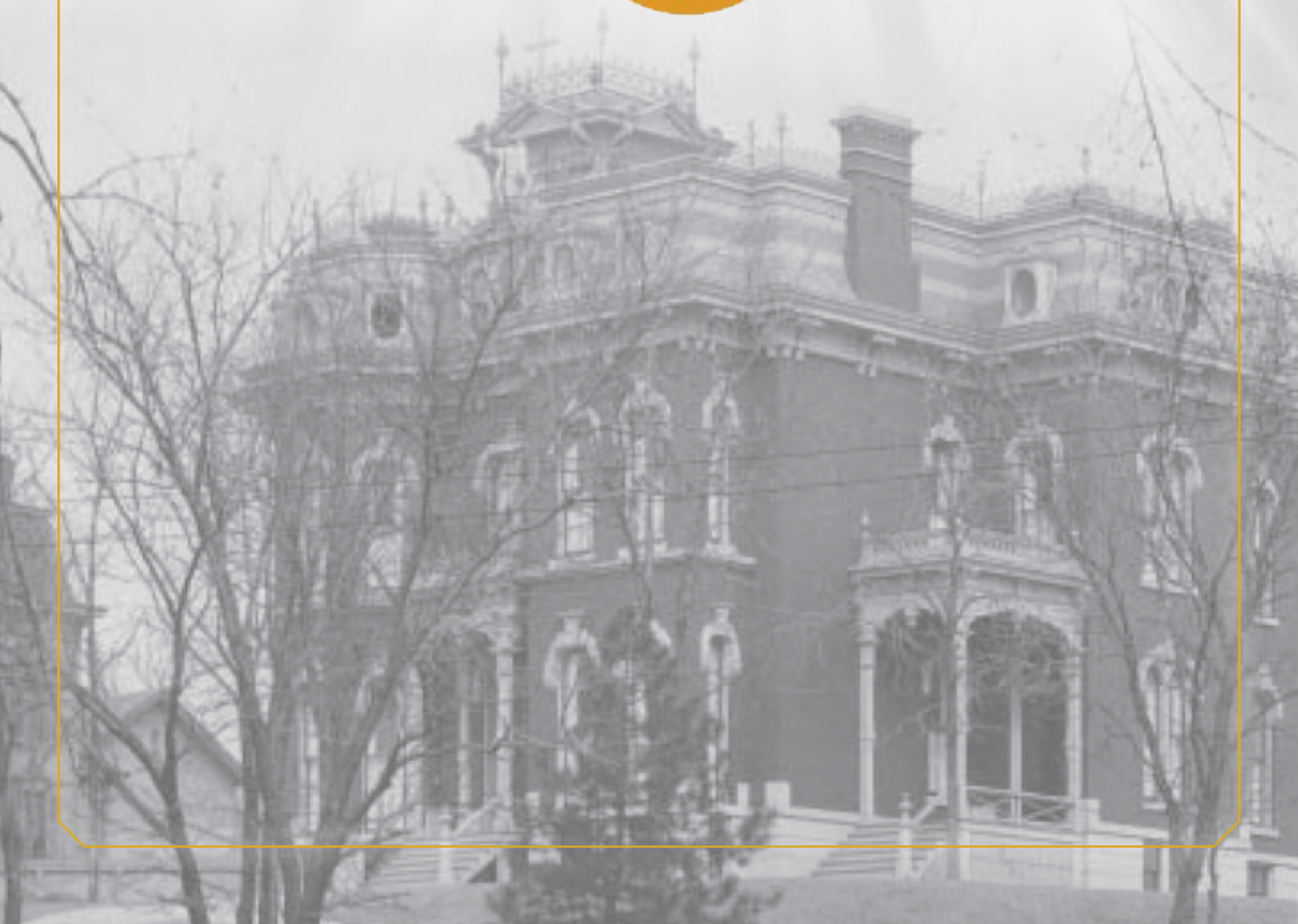


Conversion can take a lifetime.

HOUSE
— OF THE —
LION  N™



— Overview —

THE TRUE CONVERSION STORY OF SAL DI LEO.

An orphaned Sicilian boy fights his way from traumatic childhood to power-hungry adulthood, all the while struggling to find joy, meaning, and fulfillment as a father, husband, and businessman.

In 1999 Sal Di Leo wrote a moving memoir entitled “Did I Ever Thank you, Sister?” The book has gained a following around the world, and Sal has inspired thousands with his personal story.

It’s a story made for the Big Screen.

This is about real conversion - not white-washed, Hollywood-ized, “snap-your-fingers-and-come-to-Jesus” conversion. Sal’s personal path to redemption was not easy or clean. But it was intensely human, and it speaks powerfully to the human experience.

This is Sal’s story of everyone struggling for peace in a broken life and a broken world.



Mission

To tell a story of hope in faith in a film to a world where hopelessness reigns, through a true and compelling story that is dramatic, that will resonate with people of all ages, races, gender, and creed. To strengthen the faith of those who believe and convert those who do not, that there is a God and we are not alone.

Format: *Feature-length Film*

Genre: *Coming of Age*

Tone: *Gritty, Inspirational*

Themes: *Brokenness, Redemption, Forgiveness, Love*

Rating: *PG*



Property of: Joliet Franciscans Archives

— *The Hero* —

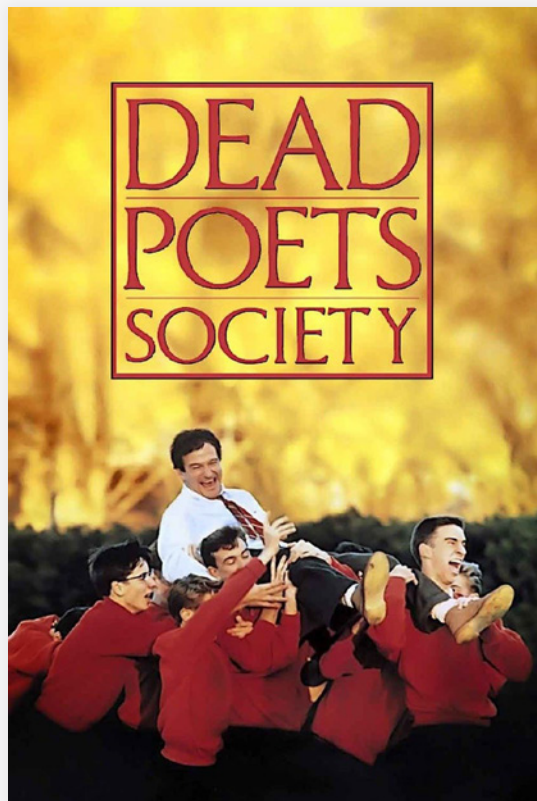
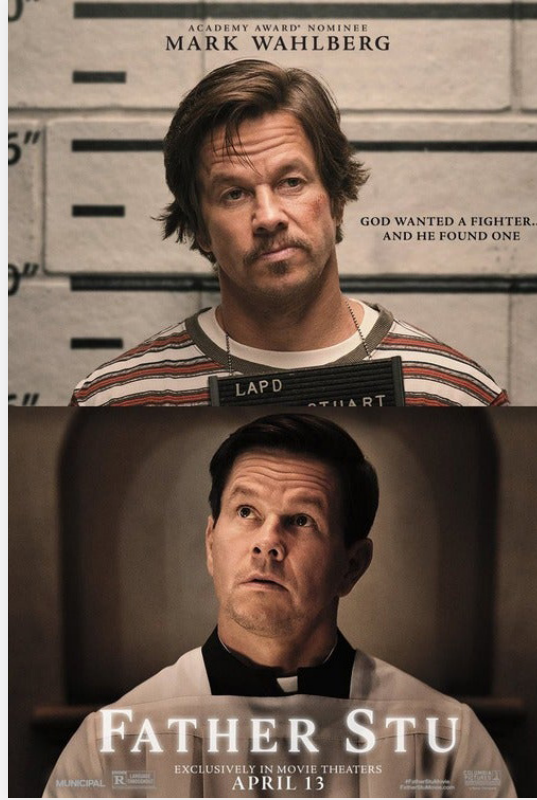
“The Sisters were always there for me as a child, and all of my life, I came to learn. I just didn’t know it until I reached the end of my rope” - Sal Di Leo

Saved by the Catholic Sisters at age 8 from a deplorable childhood, and always in their prayers after he left the orphanage at age 14, Sal is saved again by the Sisters after a self-destructive adult life. Sal is plucked from the abyss of his self-appointed living hell just before almost taking his own life as an adult. Sal finally finds his peace and purpose in life at age 45. It was the advice of his lifetime friend, Sister Mary Paul OSF, the true hero in this story, that made all the difference.



Prioress of the Cistercian abbey of Saint Mary of Rieunette near Carcassonne (France)

— Comparables —



Principal Characters



SAL

Troubled Sicilian orphan desperate for love and redemption. Terribly hurt by a traumatic childhood, Sal lashes out violently in order to protect himself and his siblings. These childhood struggles continue into adulthood.



SISTER PAUL

Tough, business-savvy old nun with a soft heart for her students. She makes a lasting impression on Sal.

ANDRE



→ Sal's older brother, and a father-figure to young Sal.

ARTHUR



→ Sal's best friend - haunted, quiet, but brilliant. Someone who was a genius with no regard to reality who needed protection.

MARY



→ Sal's first crush. A beautiful and tender-hearted soul who helps Sal get through tough grade-school years and becomes the model of what Sal hopes for someday in his girl.

BETH



→ Sal's girlfriend and then wife and his greatest supporter. High-spirited, lovely, and loving. She never gives up on her husband.

Synopsis

Joliet, Illinois. 1988

Sal Di Leo, mid 30's, stands before the quiet, empty orphanage where he grew up. He is wracked with doubts and sorrows. He quickly departs to visit a retired nun, Sister Paul. Aged but still sharp, she greets Sal fondly. As they sit together, Sister Paul asks him for his story. Sal begins...

1963

Sal, 8 years old, is woken up by the sound of his father, Antonio, packing. Antonio turns to his son and tells him that he can't stay here because he deserves better than this life. He gives Sal a medallion with a lion on it, telling the boy that he is of the House of the Lion, and never to forget it. Antonio drives off, never to return. Sal, his three siblings, and his mother are left alone with nothing.

Sal's older brother Andre brings Sal to the nearby orphanage to beg for food for their hungry siblings. They receive food, but the next morning a Social Services worker arrives to take the children away from their mother. They are brought to live at the orphanage. This is where Sal meets Sister Paul.

Sal grows up in the orphanage, fighting with anyone who dares to question him or the House of the Lion. He builds a habit of chasing people out of his life. Only Arthur manages to befriend him, and Sal becomes his protector. Throughout his time at the orphanage, Sister Paul is always there to try to guide him down a better path, no matter how many times he stumbles.

Years later, Sal and Arthur join Andre at a boarding school in Nebraska, but the boys there are cruel, aggressive, and godless. Only the toughest survive. Sal struggles through his time there, but still tries to connect with Sister Paul for guidance. People continue to come and go in his life. Even Arthur eventually leaves him. Sal feels like he can never hold on to any kind of family.

Years pass. Sal, now graduated from college, has drifted far from the path that Sister Paul had set him on. Money troubles and unsavory relationships have soured the hopes and dreams he once had. The only thing he feels he can hold on to is the House of the Lion.

One day, Sal finds himself a job in a TV rental store, and he finally feels like he has regained a sense of purpose. He is great at what he does and quickly climbs the ladder of success. He soon tries to put his new paychecks to work impressing a girl named Beth. It takes a lot of work from Sal, but she finally agrees to go on a date with him. She is a God-send for Sal. It is not long before the two are married.

Sal continues to flourish at his job. He is merciless in his sales pitch, knowing that many of the people he is renting to will not be able to make all their payments. He buys only the best for himself and his family, and he feels like he is on top of the world.

Synopsis

When Sal hires a young employee named Tony as a repo man, Sal's confidence begins to waver. Tony doesn't feel right about repossessing the TV's from the poor people who could not afford one payment. Sal lashes out at Tony, struggling to silence his own conscience.

Sal's uncertainties are multiplied when Beth announces that she is pregnant. Sal is terrified of making the same mistakes his parents made. He wants to provide all he can for this new baby. He tries to go out on his own and starts his own TV rental store.

He becomes obsessed with his business. He works long hours, trading time with his family for sales in the store. As the stress builds on him, he turns to drugs and alcohol.

On one of his outings to collect a TV from an impoverished lessee, Sal hits a crisis point. He looks at the rundown apartment, hollow-eyed kids, and single mother, and he sees his own younger self reflected back at him. Sal breaks. He sets the TV down and races from the apartment.

The next day at work, Sal is still on edge from his experience the day before. But things get worse. Sal's ambition has gotten the better of him, and he has stretched himself too thin. His credit is frozen, and he is suddenly faced with having to repay all of his debt.

When he gets home, Beth reveals that she is pregnant again. Sal is shocked. Beth only responds that he hasn't been around enough to notice.

Months later, Sal's business is in shambles. He has countless bills to pay; and he and Beth soon lose every nice thing they own. Beth cannot endure the instability anymore. She is terrified that she won't be able to feed their two children. She leaves for her parent's home, taking the children.

Once they have gone, Sal looks at his life and sees how far he has fallen. He begins to pack his things, ready to leave and never look back, when he suddenly flashes back to a similar scene many years ago. He sees himself at 8 years old begging his own father to stay. He realizes the depths to which "The House of the Lion" has led him. Sal pulls a gun from his dresser holds it to his head, ready to end the misery. But then he remembers Sister Paul, and he drops the gun to the bed and begins to weep.

Back in 1988, Sister Paul listens as Sal finishes telling his story. Sister Paul asks him what he wants. All Sal wants is his family, but he doesn't know how to get them back. She tells him that he must learn to forgive his father for his past and be grateful for what God has given him. He must do the best with what he has been given in life.

Sal leaves Sister Paul's retirement home and has a vision of his father before him. He looks at Antonio in anger for a moment, but then makes the crucial decision to forgive. He puts the past behind him, forgiving his father for everything. As Sal walks to his car, he pulls his lion medallion from his pocket and drops it down a sewer drain.

Sal calls Beth at her father's house in Rochester, MN and begs her to come home. He is free from his Father's desertion and lie. She comes back home with the children, and they embrace, hopeful for the future.

— *Look & Feel* —



— Look & Feel —



— Look & Feel —



— Filmmaking Team —



SAL DI LEO

Executive Producer

An entrepreneur, writer, and motivational public speaker, Sal volunteers much of his time serving those in need. Sal has been actively involved with Rotary and the Lions Club, and he has spoken to service clubs around the United States about his life and the importance of gratitude.

The proud father of two adult daughters who have successfully left the nest, Sal has been married to his lovely wife Beth for 40 years. A 1977 graduate of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Sal is currently semi-retired and a Business Development Consultant.



MARK THORSON

Executive Producer

Mark's writing career launched when his first play, *To Cheat A Clown*, was produced at the Pan Andreas Theater in Los Angeles. This evolved into a career of writing screenplays, two of which were sold under option. He is also a successful businessman, presiding over the highway construction company, Mark Sand & Gravel Co.

Thorson now lives in northern Minnesota and southern California, where he is currently at work on the novel, *American Ice*, a story that includes characters from three of the stories in *Final Delivery* -- *The Fifty Dollar Assassin*, *A Trip Back Down* and *The Gift*. Thorson's formal education includes both the arts and commerce. He is an alumnus of both the American Film Institute in Los Angeles, as well as the Harvard Business School in Boston.



DANIEL BIELINSKI

Producer

Daniel lives in Bismarck, North Dakota, with his wife and five children. He serves as Program Chair of the Dramatic Arts Program at the University of Mary. In 2018 he founded Canticle Productions to create film and theater that celebrates the history, land and culture of the Great Plains.

Recent and upcoming feature films include *A Heart like Water* (Fall 2021), *Sanctified* (Fall 2022), *End of the Rope* (Spring 2023). More info about these and other Canticle projects can be found at the website www.canticle-productions.com



CANTICLE PRODUCTIONS

Canticle Productions is a film production company based in North Dakota and dedicated to the telling of powerful stories that honor the people, the land, and the history of North Dakota. Founded in 2018 by Daniel Bielinski, the company produced three feature films in 2020-2021. True stories of courage, perseverance, and faith have a special place in the mission and identity of Canticle.



CONTACT

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Relevant Press:

[Catholic World Report](#), [EWTN](#), and [National Catholic Register](#)