

Bodybuilder Turned Evangelist Dennis Tinerino Dies

✖ Dennis Tinerino, a champion bodybuilder who later became an international evangelist, died Friday after an 18-month battle with stomach cancer. He was 64.

A former Mr. America and four-time Mr. Universe, Tinerino was a bodybuilding star and actor during the 1960s and 1970s. The Brooklyn native competed with Arnold Schwarzenegger for the title of Mr. Universe in 1967 and appeared in Schwarzenegger's first movie, *Hercules in New York*.

But Tinerino eventually landed in prison after getting entangled in organized crime and operating an escort service. He accepted Christ while incarcerated after striking up a long-distance relationship with former Mr. South Africa Ray McCauley, who became a prominent pastor in South Africa.

Tinerino was later baptized in the Holy Spirit and founded Dennis Tinerino Ministries in 1979. He preached across the U.S. and in dozens of countries, including South Africa, Japan, Ukraine, Greece and Australia. Friends and ministry associates say Tinerino's ministry touched millions of lives.

"We called him a prophetic evangelist because in all my years I never heard a guy who was more bold," said Tinerino's pastor, Graham Cathers of Living Faith Christian Church in Northridge, Calif. "He didn't care who you were or where he was, he was going to make sure you heard the gospel."

"His nickname was The Sermonator, jokingly," Cathers added.

Tinerino chronicled his spiritual journey in the 2006 book *Super Size Your Faith*.

Tinerino is survived by his wife, Anita; daughters Tara and

Marissa; son Dennis-John; son-in-law Eli Flora; his parents; two brothers; two nieces and two nephews. Funeral services will be held Wednesday at 11 a.m. at The Church on the Way, East Campus, in Van Nuys, Calif.