



Grace, Love, and a Life Well-Lived – Apostle Shastri's Story



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Nurtured in Faith

Apostle Sanjay Shastri's life is a testament to the power of faith, perseverance, and dedication to a higher calling. In a candid conversation, he reflects on his journey from a faith-filled childhood to leadership in the New Apostolic Church.

Born in 1969 to devout New Apostolic parents, Apostle Shastri's path was shaped early on. He grew up in Maharashtra and was Baptised at the tender age of 3. "My father was a Priest who served faithfully in the church" he shares. The early childhood experiences of traveling with his father to distant locations for spiritual work allowed him to connect with the members, learn the doctrine, and deepen his faith at a very young age.

His home was a place of spiritual growth, with his mother instilling faith through Bible stories. "My sisters and I attended church every Sunday without fail. It was a cherished family tradition" he recalls.

From Struggles to Strength

Growing up in a slum presented challenges, including long queues for water and inadequate sanitation, which worsened when his father fell ill. At the age of 15, Apostle Shastri made the difficult decision to drop out of school to assist his father who was a recruitment agent for overseas employment. This marked the beginning of his involvement in his father's work.

“After a while, the fear of a future without education weighed heavily on me” he confides. Upon learning this, his mother turned to her parents for support, enabling him to continue his education. With determination and divine grace, he graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce but faced setbacks in his job search abroad, leading him to work with his father for eight more years.

Embracing the Call to Serve

Despite his turbulent childhood, Apostle Shastri remained deeply involved with the church and began serving actively. After work, he would visit members every day, reserving Saturdays to prepare himself for the Sunday Divine Service. This commitment became his source of joy and spiritual strength.

“When my calling came, I was very much prepared and eager to take up the spiritual responsibility,” he shares.

He recounts his first responsibility in church “I was asked to ensure that no one was distracted during services”. He took on this role with much enthusiasm and seriousness. “I was always one to get distracted myself, so it seemed fitting that I was given this task by the local Evangelist” he adds with a laugh.

In 1985, he was ordained as a Deacon, and in 1989, he became an Evangelist, marking a new chapter in his ministerial journey with renewed vigor. He shared, “I had very devoted Priests working with me in Mumbai. We used to visit all our members regularly. Our Divine Services were consistent, we started Sunday school, youth confirmation classes, and even a carol singing program.”

In 1994, Shastri was appointed District Evangelist, a position that saw him leave his secular job to dedicate himself fully to the ministry. He remembers conducting over 40 services a month during this period while assisting Apostle Morris Daniel.

A Prayer for Love Answered

During a casual discussion in 1995, he asked District Apostle Erwin Wagner to pray that God would lead him to a good life partner. To this request, District Apostle Wagner shared a childhood memory of praying for his wife when he was just 13 years old. Inspired by this, Apostle Shastri began praying for his life partner, and soon his prayers were answered. In May 1995, he married his wife, Ruth.

Sister Ruth joined him on his journeys, deepening her understanding of the doctrine and growing in the New Apostolic faith. This eventually led to her being sealed by Apostle Morris Daniel. In 1996, the couple was blessed with a son. By then, Apostle Shastri had been given the responsibility of District Elder.

Leadership Rooted in Compassion and Community

The call to serve reached new heights in 2002, he was ordained as an Apostle in the Philippines. During his 22-year ministry as an Apostle, he tirelessly served in Maharashtra, Delhi, Jharkhand, Bihar, Rajasthan, and northern regions of India, nurturing the faith of thousands and fostering deep spiritual connections within the community.

One of the most rewarding aspects of his spiritual work has been connecting with people, visiting their homes, and praying together. “I have members eager to join me in prayers, even as early as 5:30 am when my day starts,” he shares.

He fondly remembers Shepherd Selvaraj from his childhood. The Shepherd often took him to Tamil services and ensured to include Hindi translations to make Apostle Shastri feel included. This act of kindness inspired him greatly. Apostle Shastri also highlights the influence of Apostle Morris Daniel and Apostle David Devaraj who led by example in following God's will and serving with humility.

A profound learning from his spiritual life that has greatly impacted his personal life is the importance of giving and offerings. He recalls learning this from his mother and passing it on to his wife and son. “This is something I brought from the church into my home life. We have been truly blessed. We didn't become rich people; I didn't have all the worldly things, but the happiness—that happiness has seeped into my personal life. And it came from God,” he reflects.

Beyond his home, this happiness has also radiated into his spiritual work. Apostle Shastri is often described as bubbly and full of life, bringing joy wherever he goes.

Lessons from a Life of Service

As an Apostle, Shastri reflects on a valuable lesson learned through his struggles: “The spiritual life and worldly life are two different worlds. To support the faith of the congregation, one must have enough knowledge and experience in worldly matters.”

Despite his deep spiritual understanding, not having worked in an office before his calling meant that he faced a steep learning curve in understanding the administrative side of the Apostle ministry. “I was fortunate to have Apostle Pravin Gajbhiv's guidance in this area” he acknowledges.

Grace in Transition

Early last year, Apostle Shastri learned that he would receive his retirement blessing in 2025. Reflecting on his spiritual journey, he speaks of the profound closeness to God and inner peace he has experienced—feelings he once thought unimaginable. The Apostle adds, “I see people around me who retire at an early age and often feel very restless and worried. I am retiring in my mid-50s, yet my heart is filled with happiness. For me, this happiness and strength comes from God.”

“My entire life has been with this community, and I will continue that. I will be in the church, in the work of God. Me and my wife will stay involved. Though I will miss conducting services,” he admits.

Retirement and Renewal

After his retirement, he is looking forward to creating more precious memories with his wife, son, daughter-in-law, and the growing family. “Traveling and serving all my life, I have missed quite a bit of time with my family,” he explains. “My wife has been by my side, traveling and cooking for me. Now, I cannot wait to finally cook for her. This is going to be my new hobby,” he shares with great excitement.

Guidance for the Next Generation

To aspiring ministers, Apostle Shastri advises: “Protect and take care of your soul. Among all the distractions of the world, it is vital to stay focused and keep your soul ready for a spiritual connection with God.”

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In his own words, his life journey can be summed up in two words “*grace and love.*” These words indeed reflect the essence of a life well-lived in the service of God and humanity.

On January 26, 2025, Apostle Shastri received his retirement blessing from District Apostle Helper David G. Devaraj in Thane, Maharashtra, marking the end of a remarkable chapter in his life and ministry.

Surrounded by family, friends, and congregation members, the occasion was a heartfelt tribute to his spiritual impact within the church and the lasting personal connections he has nurtured throughout his ministry.

We wish Apostle Sanjay Shastri a joyful and peaceful retirement, as he embraces this new chapter with the same grace and love that defined his journey so far.

Gallery





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