



Interviewer – Basil, would you share with us a bit about your roots, your family and early education?

Basil – My parents are from Kerala, in south India. They came to the United States and settled in New Jersey in 1987, where I was born and lived until I was three years old. Then, we moved to India and lived in Kerala for a few years before returning to the United States. After living in New York for five years, we moved to Georgia where we have been since 2004.

My father, Rev. Mathai Puthukkunnathu, is a Syrian Orthodox priest under the Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church in North America and works for the United Behavioral Health Department of United Healthcare. My mother, Julie, is a pharmacy technician at Northside Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. My sister, Ashley, is currently settled in New York with her husband Rev. Dn. Belson Kuriakose.

I started school when I was living in India, but only completed one year there since we moved back to the United States the next year. I attended public schools in New York and Georgia and attended the Gwinnett School of Math, Science and Technology for high school, from which I graduated in 2011.

- Would you share with us your religious education background?

– As the grandson of a priest and the son of a priest, my religious formation began at an early age. Along with attending Sunday school, the primary institution for educating the young in the Syrian Orthodox Church, I learned more about my faith and traditions from my father. He taught me early on that a life of faith and devotion to God is more essential than anything else. However, I only realized my call to serve in ordained ministry during my undergraduate education. I was ordained to the diaconate in 2014. Under my father's tutelage and with training from our Archdiocese, I am continuing in my religious formation.

I attended the University of Georgia for undergraduate studies and majored in History and International Affairs. In the third year of my studies, I completed an internship in Washington, D.C. in the U.S. House of Representatives. After graduating this past May, I enrolled at Boston College to pursue a M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies.

– How did you come to be a resident at the Assumptionist Center?

– I came to know about the Assumptionist Center community when I met Fr. Claude Grenache, A.A. at Boston College's Off-Campus Housing Fair in June. I was welcomed into the Center and realized that this is where I wanted to live during my studies. Everyone at the Center has welcomed me with open arms and it has been a blessing to be part of this community.

- What has been your experience living with folks coming from a different religious tradition?

- My experience at the Center has been unique. Being from another denomination, it took me some time to become accustomed to the differences, but I feel much more comfortable now than my first few weeks. I was feeling quite homesick and anxious in the beginning, especially because I was not familiar with many aspects of the religious traditions, but over time those feelings have subsided. I have been able to make close connections and build strong relationships with many of the residents over the past few months. More importantly, participating in the liturgies has been a great learning experience for me since I come from a different denomination.

– What are your plans for the future?

– After completing my master's education, I hope to pursue a PhD in History along with theological studies at a seminary in preparation for the priesthood.

– Do you have any hobbies and other interests?

- My hobbies include reading, watching films and playing/watching various sports. The Syrian Orthodox tradition is very rich in liturgical music, especially in its structure of various tones. I enjoy learning them and chanting in my free time.