



The Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Within Bethany” **ΒΗΘΑΝΙΑ**

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ΠΕΝΙΩΤ ΕΥΤΑΙΗΟΥΤ ΔΒΒΑ ΨΑΝΟΥΤ ΠΙΔΑΖΩΟΥΤ ΠΕΝΙΩΤ

Among the most moving descriptions of the Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the saying of the Holy Bible, “And He left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and He lodged there.” (Matthew 21:17) Some of you may ask, “What is so moving in this description?” The answer is that many stood up against the Lord Jesus Christ, the High Priests, the Elders of the people, the Pharisee and the Sadducee scribes, and others. They conspired to kill Him, but in spite of all the plots that were planned against Him, there were faithful hearts that loved Him in Bethany, so He “lodged” there. For the Lord Jesus Christ, Bethany represented the faithful hearts that loved Him.

In the middle of all the difficulties He encountered in Jerusalem, He found rest in the village of Bethany. Jerusalem was a great city, but it was filled with conspiracies, clamor, noise, and intrigue; its leaders were troublesome. In Bethany, there was Lazarus for whom the Lord Jesus Christ had wept, and the people said, “See how much He loved him.” There were loving people who gathered around the Lord, and who believed in Him following the resurrection of Lazarus. There was Mary who represented meditation, and Martha who represented service. In Bethany, there was the simplicity that could not be found in the city.

In this blessed village, there were hearts faithful to the Lord, and He therefore preferred to spend there the last days before His crucifixion. Yes, He preferred it to Jerusalem. The big city of Jerusalem did not possess a big heart. Jerusalem, the city of the great King, conspired against the great King and did not deserve Him, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” (John 1:11); so He left it for Bethany.

The Lord gave His goodwill to Jerusalem; He blessed its name and did not abandon it. However, the great city had no love and the Lord

wept for it saying, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that kills the prophets, and stones them which are sent unto thee...” (Matthew 23:37)

Jerusalem has a distinguished name, and Bethany is unknown. Many among you may not know the history of Bethany or where it is located, for it is not famous like Jerusalem, but it is filled with faithfulness, loyalty, and love. The Lord found it restful there, for the importance of every human being before God, is not in his celebrity, but in His love.

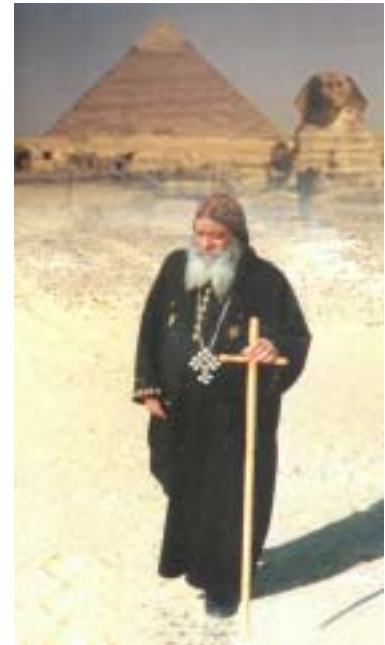
The Jews were renowned for their faith. The Gentiles did not have the same reputation, but they had ready hearts, and they were able to precede the Jews to the heart of God and to the bosom of Abraham. God found rest among them.

The Gentiles were another ìBethany. î

St Paul the Apostle witnessed to this. For when the Jews refused his preaching, he turned to the Gentiles and found that their hearts were open (Acts 28:28).

The examples of Bethany and its spiritual symbolism in the Holy Bible:

In many instances, we find that in the midst of the surrounding darkness, lights shine and bring back to





us the memory of Bethany. These lights are very often the beginning of a new era, a covenant between God and His people. When God finds loving hearts among the numerous evils, He is pleased with them. We will try here to give examples from the Holy Book, besides that of the Gentiles, to explain the spiritual meaning of Bethany.

It is the heart that draws near amidst the remoteness of many.

At some time, the whole world was filled with evil. All the people deviated, were corrupted and left God, and God decided to annihilate all life on earth. In the middle of all this evil and the depravity that was spreading, He found a heart that loved Him and obeyed Him, the heart of Noah the pure, and his family with him. The Lord took them, and placed them in an Ark. He started with them a new age for humanity, for he had found His quiescence in them.

For the Lord, the Ark was Bethany and He lodged there.

The Ark was the residence of God with the people, the only place where the Lord could rest His head, and find love, faithfulness, and purity of heart in that age of darkness.

In each generation, God was not without witnesses, "He left not Himself without witness" (Acts 14:17). The faithful souls are numerous, some

apparent, and others unseen, working in secrecy in every place on earth where there is a Bethany for the Lord.

The Twelve were the first Bethany in Christianity.

They were the hearts that were truly faithful to the Lord Who trusted them with His Mission and His Kingdom. They were those about whom it was said in the Holy Gospel, "He loved them unto the end." (John 13:1) They defended Him with all their might and they were witnesses to Him everywhere. They were Bethany and He rested in them during their lives on earth.

The Lord Jesus Christ also found Bethany on the Holy Cross.

They all renounced Him and mocked Him, even one of the two thieves who were crucified with Him on the Holy Cross. However, the Lord found other hearts to love Him, to be faithful to Him and to believe in Him, as He was crucified before them. The first among them was the Holy Virgin Mary, St John the Beloved, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Cleophas. They were those who remained by the Holy Cross until the last moment, they did not forsake Him, even after His death, when Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea joined them. They were Bethany to the Lord, and He rested in them when all had deserted Him. (Matthew 26:56-57 and John 19:26-27)



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The thief on His right was also Bethany to Him.

He was the partner in the agony, the companion on the Holy Cross. He witnessed to the Lord publicly, while He was in pain, and the Lord was at ease with his companionship. He took him with Him from the Holy Cross to Paradise. He was the first Bethany to enter Paradise from Golgotha.

Truly, how wonderful and how profound is the heart that took the Lord within itself, and that was taken by the Lord within Himself, while both were on the cross.

As we remember the house of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, where the Lord spent days before His Crucifixion, we cannot forget another house the Lord had entered that week:

The house of Mary, the mother of St Mark the Apostle.

In the Upper Room of that house, the Lord washed His disciples' feet; He celebrated the Passover with them; He established the Eucharist and entrusted them with the Great Mystery. It was there that He addressed His disciples with words that filled four chapters of St John's Holy Gospel (John 13 to 17). He promised to send the Holy Spirit to them, and indeed in that same house, the Holy Spirit descended upon them on the day of Pentecost. This house became the first Church in Christendom (Acts 12:12). Bethany became not only for the Lord, but for the disciples as well, and for the whole Church, and in it, all found their peace.

We hail the women who have donated their houses to the Church.

As we have hailed the holy women Mary and Martha and Mary the mother of St Mark, we also hail the saints who have donated their houses to the Lord to become churches. The house of Lydia, the seller of purple became a Church, it became Bethany for St Paul and Silas, who went there after they went out of prison (Acts 16: 15-40). The house of Aquila and Priscilla, who "had laid down their own necks" for the sake of St Paul the Apostle, who said, "Greet the Church that is in their house." (Romans 16:3,5) Besides these, there were many more.

There are examples of sanctity in the Old Testament. The widow of Zidon who opened her home to Elia the Prophet, and he dwelled in an upper room in her home (I Kings 17: 9-19). Her house became Bethany for him and he dwelled there during the famine.

We remember also the holy woman of Shunem who opened her house to Elisha the Prophet. He dwelled in an upper room that she had prepared for him (II Kings 4:10). Her house was Bethany for him; he loved it, sanctified it, and rejoiced when he came to it. The house was restful for him for he favored it and he spent the night there.

It is love that these people offer to God and His men.

The Lord Jesus Christ loved the village of Bethany and the hearts which were opened to Him with wonderful loyalty, far from the noise of Jerusalem and its intrigues.

He spent some of the days prior to His Crucifixion in Bethany, and then He went to the Temple and came back to Bethany to spend the night.



Sanctified and wonderful was the house of Mary and Martha.

The Lord blessed it in the days before His Crucifixion. Sanctified and wonderful was Mary the sister of Lazarus. During these days, she took a vial of expensive pure spikenard ointment and poured it over the Lord Jesus Christ's head as He was sitting with Simon the Leper, in Bethany. Annoyed, the disciples said, "To what purpose is this waste?" and the Lord defended Mary saying, "Why trouble ye the woman? For in that she hath poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial." (Matthew 26:8-10) He also said to them, "To whomsoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, what she hath done shall be spoken of as a memorial of her." (Mark 14:9) St John the Beloved said that on this occasion, she anointed the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ with the ointment, "And wiped His feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." (John 12:2-3)

Blessed are these homes that have welcomed the Lord Jesus Christ.

The house of Mary and Martha was not the only one that the Lord visited in Bethany in those days. Many homes were opened to Him, those of the faithful who were steadfast in their love for Him.

They did not abandon Him when all forsook him.



Anointing the Lord's feet
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The Lord Jesus Christ entered many homes, as a preacher or as a teacher. Such a home was the house where the roof was uncovered and broken to let down the bed of the man who was sick with palsy (Mark 2:3). Another home entered into as a guest, was the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 87:36). Or out of courtesy as in the house in Galilee, where the marriage of Cana was celebrated (John 2). The guiding and accepting of the sinners was the purpose of entering the house of Zacchaeus the publican (Luke

19:7), and other publicans.

There was no motive in all this narrative, but a wish to concentrate on the houses that the Lord had entered during the Holy Week, and that had been opened for Him while leaders of the Jews conspired to kill Him. Emphasis was especially placed upon the houses in which He dwelled in Bethany.

Is your own home among those opened for the Lord Jesus Christ?

Is your house ready to receive Him in these Holy Days? The Lord Jesus Christ is ready to go to your home, but it is important to be ready to receive Him, and not be occupied with other things. Your house should be in a state of sanctity, worthy to receive the Lord.

May you receive the Lord in these days, with propriety in your hearts and your thoughts.✙