



Mother Maria was born in Karaganda, USSR, now Kazakhstan, to a German Mennonite family. Her family emigrated to Germany when she was 11 years old. She grew up loving school and horseback riding. Her very first visit to an Orthodox church came when, at 16, a Russian cousin took her to the all-night services of Holy Pascha. This was the moment she met God! She got home happy at 6 a.m. only to try to convince her father that she had been out all night because of church!

She graduated from gymnasium (high school) and enrolled in the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, for math and physics and at 21 years old was baptized in the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Nicholas in Stuttgart. One year later she transferred to the Ludwigsburg University of Education to study elementary education. It was during college that she discovered her attraction the vibrant monasticism of the Orthodox Church. She went for her first visit to a women's monastery not far from Paris. And in 2002, upon graduation from college, she spent two months at St. John the Forerunner Greek Orthodox Monastery in Metamorfoosi, Greece. This monastery fit her perfectly and she hoped to return forever to the stillness she experienced.

But, instead of Greece, she received a blessing to go for three months to St. Mary Magdalene Convent in Gethsemane. She arrived in February 2003 and joined the sisterhood as a novice that June. One of her obediences in 2005 was to teach math in Russian twice a week in Bethany where the monastery runs a school for girls. In May 2005 she was transferred to Bethany full-time. In August, 2005 she was tonsured a Rasophore nun receiving the name Martha (of Bethany), put in charge as Head Sister of the Bethany Community of the Resurrection of Christ and made the principal of the Orthodox School of Bethany perfectly on time for the beginning of the new school year on September 1st. It seems that God has a good sense of humor and instead of the quietness of Greece she ended up in the middle of the Muslim environment of the West Bank with lots of children and teachers to manage. But He knows best how to save us!

During the 5th week of Great Lent 2019, Sister Martha took monastic vows in St. Mary Magdalene Church in Gethsemane and was given the name Maria, in honor of the other sister of St. Lazarus of the Four-Day Resurrection. On January 24th, 2020, the feast day of St Theodosius the Great, Mother Maria was awarded the gold pectoral cross.