

**April 17, 2020**

**Dear Parishioners of Christ on the Mountain,**

In this time of social isolation we may find we have more time alone. Time to be spiritually in the desert. This is a time of listening to the quiet. It is an opportunity for us to be quiet. Gregory Meyers book Listen to the Desert gives insight into how to come to the desert and listen. He reflects on the spiritual maturity from some of the teachings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers. In the second chapter of his book he gives an account of what Abba Poemen learned from Abba Joseph. Abba Poemen said to Abba Joseph. "Tell me how I can become a monk." He replied, "if you want to be a monk in every occasion say who am I? And do not judge anyone."

Abba Poemen realized that he was a fractured, scattered individual. He wanted to know how to become a monk. The translation of the word monk from the Greek is important here. The root of the word is monos one or singular. It carries the sense of completeness or wholeness. Abba Poemen was asking Abba Joseph how can I become whole. Deep down inside all of us we have this question, "How can I become whole and complete?"

Abba Joseph tells him in every occasion say "Who am I?" It is a mantra said over and over in the stillness of our being. The answer to the question often comes from our memory. We want to get to the question before the memory, before the thinking. "Who am I?" before thinking. And according to Abba Joseph we are not to judge the answer. The more we ask "who am I?" without judgement the more we will find wholeness and completeness. We may end up with the answer to this question being "I am."

**In His Resurrection and Love,**

**Fr. David**