

Wednesday, December 5 - Frank Pifer

Read Malachi 3:1-4

I am sure that many of us own some piece(s) of silver or gold ring(s). Have you ever thought about how it came to be in that form? Even before it was ever shaped into anything however, the metal had to be refined. Refining is the process by which a metal or some other substance is purified. But you know that in referring to the process of refining in his message through the prophet Malachi, God was not in the least interested in gold or silver, or any precious metal for that matter. No, he was interested in something much more valuable to him: souls. While precious metals can still retain a level of worth even if they aren't 100% pure, that isn't the case when it comes to souls. No, the only soul that is acceptable to God is a pure soul, a soul without any impurities at all. Only perfection will do; anything less does not pass the test. This of course presents a big problem for you and me, as it did for Malachi's audience. You see, perfection's not really our thing. We're kind of unqualified to achieve the whole "purity" thing. It's not that we don't want to; it's that we can't. And we know it. God wants souls that are free from impurities. John the Baptist's message revealed God's method for seeing to it that souls meet his standard of quality. He spoke of preparing and straightening paths and crooked roads. Those pictures of road repair are another way to depict the actions referred to by Malachi, who said, **"He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver" (v.3)**. There it is, God's preferred plan for purifying souls: seeing to it that they are refined. God, as we go through this process of refining, never leaves us or forsakes us. He remains by our side. As repentance forces us to come face to face with the harsh, ugly reality of our sin, it's possible it might be too much for the Christian. God will continue to keep his eye on us, not about to lose one of his children through repentance, when it is that very method by which he seeks to purify his children in the first place. Not only does he remain by our side throughout, never leaving us, but he also knows just how long we need to be in the fires of refinement. You know how the refiner could tell when the impurities had burned away and it was time to remove the metal from the fire? It was when he could see his shiny reflection in the gold or silver. That was when he knew it was ready. That is when it was pure. God is constantly observing us. As he steadies and strengthens our faith through his Word and his sacrament, his reflection becomes more and more clear. When he looks and sees his reflection with perfect clarity – when he sees Christ – dear friends, that is when the process of refinement has served its purpose. And that is really what repentance does.

Heavenly Father, as we go through our refinement period, we are so grateful that you are there by our sides, never leaving us. We know that you will steady and strengthen our spirits and faith. Help us to reflect during this Advent season on the greatest that we will ever receive-your son, Jesus Christ. Amen