

JAN. - FEB. 2005

EPIPHANY TO ASHES

The liturgical cycle is sometimes wrenching in its proximity of glory and defeat. In just two months, we move from Epiphany and Transfiguration to Ashes and the desert temptations of Lent.

It begins in glory.

The Magi, with gifts of gold and priceless treasures, follow a star to the Christ child in the arms of Mary

In Transfiguration, not three Magi but three Apostles behold Christ become a star of light. They are summoned also to follow this star by becoming disciples and offering the gift of their lives in service and love.

It is all glory, it seems.

Not long after, we are given ashes to remind us of our death and of the death of Christ. There will be darkness in the heavens and in our hearts. We are called to repentance so that the light will not be lost, so that the star of grace will still burn bright.

The Gospel is a story of anguish and healing, of wounds and wonder, of temptation and transformation. It ends in hope but not easily, not quickly.

We are summoned to make the lessons of this liturgical cycle the lived experiences of our lives. The darkness is always terrifying but also temporary. If we understand this, we shall never lose hope. There is glory in the ashes, grace in the testing, and grandeur in the wilderness.

Anthony