

2021 St. John the Apostle

There are numerous parallels between the Nativity of Jesus and the Resurrection of Jesus worth mentioning for our edification.

The Incarnation marks a new beginning for creation but also points to the **eternal beginnings** of Jesus: We “proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us” (I Jn 1:2). The Resurrection also marks the beginning of a new creation and the **divine origins** of Jesus: “he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent” (Col 1:18).

“Hidden in the **womb of the flesh** he sanctified human birth by his birth. Hidden afterward in the **womb of the earth**, he gave life to the dead by his resurrection.” (Hesychius of Jerusalem, Easter Homily 5-6.5)

Jesus was born in the **middle of the night**, likely midnight, if the liturgical celebration of it is any indication. Jesus rose from the grave early in the dawn while it was **still night**. A new day begins.

Just as Christ was born from his Mother’s inviolate **womb**, so too he rose again from the closed **tomb**. (Chrysostom, Homily on Holy Saturday)

Jesus was wrapped in **swaddling clothes** and laid in a manger. The swaddling clothes would form part of the Angel’s testimony to the shepherds. So too the shroud which wrapped the body of Jesus in the tomb will form part of the testimony of the resurrection. When John sees the **napkin** wrapped up by itself, “He sees and believes.”

Jesus is born in a **cave**, which alone welcomes him, since there is no room in the inn. In a **cave** he is buried and the underworld welcomes him as he frees our ancestors from the curse of death.

Angels announce the birth of Jesus just as **angels** announce the resurrection of Jesus.

The mystery of the Incarnation draws the poor shepherds and the rich Magi to Christ. Symbolically **all people** are represented in them. Jesus in his Resurrection first draws all the apostles to himself and then sends them to **all people** to make them his disciples.

Finally, the Incarnation brings **exceeding joy** to the shepherds and to the Magi, besides many others, like Simeon and Anna. So, too, the Resurrection will bring **exceeding joy** first to the women then to the Apostles and finally to us.

What does all this mean for us? That Christmas and the Resurrection are really about the one mysterious Person of Christ. They also make up a unity inside time (his birth) and outside time (his resurrection). The humanity and divinity of Jesus form a unity in his person. The nativity prepares us for his earthly life, the resurrection prepares us for eternal life.

But if we were to take away a particular fruit, it would be Mary’s response: “Be it done to me according to your word.” (Lk 1:38) She renounces her own judgement and embraces the Word of faith given in the power of the Holy Spirit, and thus conceives the **humanity** of the Son of God. At the Cross she is united to his **divinity** in a new and profound way, becoming Mother of all the redeemed. Mary and the Holy Spirit shape and preserve within us the unity of the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, which is the mystery of Christmas.

All patristic texts are taken from: *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament, IV b, John 11-21 Edited by Joel C. Elowsky, General Editor Thomas C. Oden Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2007), 336-354.