



## Reflection

### Jesus takes a selfie

By Maria Evans a member of the Episcopal Church

*Emmanuel... "God with us."*

The concept of a child representing God among us is first introduced in Isaiah 7, around 700 B.C. The setting is the Syro-Ephraimite War, and Judah is at war with Ephraim (Israel) and Syria (Aram.) Ahaz, king of Judah, wants to ask Assyria for help despite being attacked by the armies of Ephraim and Syria because Ahaz refuses to join them in their anti-Assyrian stance.

Isaiah's foreign policy advice is simple: Ahaz should rely on God rather than foreign alliances. God instructs Isaiah to take his son Shear-jasub (whose name means "a remnant shall return") and prophesy to Ahaz that the clear sign that these attackers will not succeed is that a virgin ("young woman" in some texts) will give birth to a son named Immanuel, and that the enemy's lands will be deserted "before the child is old enough to refuse the evil and do the good." (Isaiah 7:16.)

Over time, "Immanuel" became Romanized to "Emmanuel." Over time, the concept of Emmanuel began to change, also, when people began to come around to the notion that God among us might not be connected to victory or prosperity, but to the idea that God among us might assume a more humble and non-descript place in the world--a child of dubious local parentage, in a manger.

Our tendency is to think that Christ came to earth a long time ago, and Christ's return is off in the distance, in the "not yet." Some long for a conqueror. Some think it's way out there, towards that nebulous thing we call "the end of the world." Some like to point to all the things going on in the world and claim Christ will return soon. (Well, that's probably been happening since the day after the Ascension; sooner or later, someone will be right, I suppose, but a lot of folks have gone to their grave being wrong on that one.)

Yet the part we don't like to think about is the possibility that God is already with us...because if God is already with us, why is so much around us so broken?

Perhaps the answer is in the first part of John 1-- the Creation story in the New Testament--the creation of the Word, or logos. Another way to look at the opening lines of John 1 is, "In the beginning was the Divine Conversation...and the Divine Conversation was God, and the Divine Conversation was about God."

Conversations take at least two participants. In other words, the Divine Conversation exists because of the dialogue between God and humankind. God's desire to participate in the Divine Conversation with us was manifested by taking human form in the person of Jesus.

There's a great cartoon on Patheos' Naked Pastor, [David Hayward](#), that speaks volumes about the reality that God, is, indeed, already here with us. It's called "[Jesus takes a selfie.](#)" Jesus has a smart phone and does the obligatory self-photo for uploading. When he turns the camera around, it's a throng of people. Us. It's a reminder that, although we Episcopalians highly prize things like apostolic succession and the laying on of hands by bishops, the most important way we reveal the inward grace in those sorts of visible and outward signs is to lay hands on each other, and lay our hands in the places where the world seems irreparably broken. These Twelve Days of Christmas are, indeed, a time to rejoice that God is already among us.

Where can you catch a glimpse of Jesus in your selfie, or in your parish selfie?



