

CHRISTMAS 2019
COMMUNION AND LIBERATION

As soon as the Unnamed entered the room, Federigo went to meet him with a calm and friendly expression, and arms outstretched, as if to welcome a guest; “there have been many times, over a long period, when I should have come to you.”

“Come to me? Do you know who I am?
Was my name given to you correctly?”

The Cardinal seized his hand with loving violence saying, “Do not prevent me from clasping this hand.” With these words he put his arms around the neck of the Unnamed, who at first tried to draw away, and resisted for a moment; but then he seemed to be overcome by that impulse of divine charity and threw his arms around the Cardinal. The Unnamed freed himself from that embrace and said “O truly great and truly merciful God! Now I know myself, now I understand what I am!”

“You must not think,” he said, “that I shall be satisfied with this single visit of yours for today. You will come back, won’t you?”

“Do you ask if I will come back?” replied the Unnamed. “If you turn me from your door, I shall wait outside as obstinately as any beggar. I need to talk to you! I need to hear your voice and see your face! I need you!”

Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*

Caravaggio, *Adoration of the Shepherds* (detail), 1609.
Regional Museum of Messina, Italy. © A. Dagli Orti/Scala, Florence



The Christian event has the form of an encounter with a physical, bodily reality, one made of time and space. It is an encounter with a present, living, wholly human reality, whose exhaustive meaning is that of being a visible sign of Christ’s presence, God-made-man within the precariousness of a human form. This encounter is what continually orients our life, imparting meaning and synthesis to our existence. Without it, there is no source of awareness of life’s newness.

Luigi Giussani