# THE MAN WHO SAW ME



Ferdinando Frega

I was never fortunate enough to have a mentor.

For the first twenty-seven years of my life, I encountered almost exclusively women. Women of every temperament, every sensitivity, every intellectual and human stature. Perhaps life simply wanted to remind me of an elementary truth: I too was the son of a woman. And what a son.

Then came 1992.

A political campaign, built around an entrepreneur from Cosenza in the education sector who would later become a Member of the Italian Parliament against all expectations, changed the course of many things. Not because of politics itself, but because of the people I was given the opportunity to meet. They were the ones who opened the door to possibilities.

I was a novice in a world built on belonging. No one could understand where I came from.

The question was always the same.

> *"Why has no one initiated him? Why has no one taken him under their wing?"*

They saw me as a rough stone upon which no one had yet worked.

From different directions came invitations, approaches, proposals. They often originated in environments that had little to do with culture, history, or genuine inner growth. They were worlds sustained by subservience, domination, and the simple exercise of power.

I observed them with respect, but from a distance.

There were rooms I did not wish to enter.

And I did not enter them.

Then one day I received a phone call.

It was Gino Domanico, a true master of life.

A university professor who had chosen to devote himself to teaching, he possessed that rare elegance of communication that cannot be taught and cannot be imitated. After only a few moments of conversation, I understood something that seemed absurd to me at the time and that I still believe today:

I had just met the man to whom I would entrust an important part of my growth.

He invited me to dinner.

It was never a courtship, nor a formal lesson. Gino had a particular gift: he could read souls and minds. Mine was probably an open book to him.

He never explained what his role was, nor from which tradition he came. He simply left me with a sentence I have never forgotten:

> *"One day, when you truly see me, with or without the screens, you will know who I am and where I am."*

Even as a novice, I understood the meaning of those words.

I was a man knocking at the door of a temple, asking for light. Not material light, because neither of us worked for an electric company, but the kind of light that allows a person to see himself more clearly.

Gino made the first gesture of welcome.

Then came Tonino.

One of the most respected figures within the institution, he observed me for only a short time before asking the same question I had already heard many times.

> *"Why did no one see him before? Where has he been all these years?"*

The answer was simple.

> *"He works in Cosenza. He was born in Reggio Calabria. He knows half the world. People care about him. And he is one of us. The only difference is that after his Catholic baptism, he never received any other initiations."*

That answer was enough.

I was allowed to begin, in the proper manner and at the proper time, the path reserved for the Sons of the Widow.

From that moment on, Gino never held my hand.

He did not need to.

His glance and a few words were enough. With him, a silence could contain more teaching than a five-hundred-page book.

Then the day arrived.

I found him there among the benches.

Silent. Almost severe.

The place required a particular posture, first inward, then outward.

During a brief pause in the Chamber of Reflection's outer space, the Hall of Lost Steps, we found ourselves standing side by side. He approached me without saying much. Yet in that moment we both felt the same emotion.

An emotion that has never faded.

Thirty-three years later, it is still here.

Perhaps because certain encounters do not belong to the past.

They continue to initiate us every time we remember them.

TFA
Ferdinando Frega

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**P.S.**

After writing this story, I felt as though an authentic piece of the mosaic was missing. A few hours of reflection during the night were enough for me to understand what it was.

That summer Gino was staying at his villa by the sea. He had invited me several times to visit him and, one evening, I finally found the opportunity to knock on his door.

He welcomed me with an affection I have never forgotten, and it was on that occasion that I met Teresa, the woman of his life.

She was young, elegant, and naturally gracious. She did not belong to the category of people who seek to impress others. A few minutes were enough to perceive a lively intelligence accompanied by a rare ability to understand the person standing before her.

She worked in banking and held a position of responsibility. In the years that followed, I heard remarkably similar comments from friends and colleagues who knew her well: Teresa possessed an uncommon intuition and an extraordinary ability to assess the reliability of people almost immediately.

A natural rapport developed between us.

It was easy to understand that we both cared deeply for the same person. Naturally in different ways, but with the same underlying affection.

I had found a sister of the heart to care for. She never expressed such things in words, yet I often had the feeling that she had recognized something similar.

That meeting, however, produced an even more important effect.

It confirmed a conviction that time has never disproved: a good mentor almost always reveals himself through the eyes of the

woman who walks beside him. She does not replace the mother, nor is she confused with her. She completes the human portrait of the man.

And my mentor was one of those men.

Kind regards,
Ferdinando Frega