

Life of the Spirit

Volume V

JANUARY 1951

Number 55

INVOCATION TO THE DOVE¹

BEING THE INTRODUCTION
TO 'ART AND DIVINE GRACE'

BY

DOM CLEMENT JACOB²

THOU whom long ago I encountered in the course of my theological studies in an article by St Thomas, come now to my aid! Who has not at some time found the study of sacred science painful and comfortless? The deepening and widening of our knowledge of Truth is not always accompanied by a corresponding increase of joy.

When I was studying for the priesthood I loved St Thomas; but it was a purely intellectual love, light without warmth, music without melody.

Then thou didst appear, O Dove of Sweetness, and I know that the hearts of Saints and Doctors are not devoid of poetry. A thousand miles from the dark mysticism of St John of the Cross thou didst reveal to me other forms of wisdom in equilibrium and clarity. Hidden in one of the responses of the *Ad Quartum*, as a dove in the hollow of a rock, thou taughtest me the meaning of choice and discretion and the true use of symbolism.

It is to thee, then, that I turn when I wish to recall the relationships, the conflicts and the union of art and divine grace. Thou livest by the waters and when the vulture appears, thou plungest and escapest. May I too live by the life-giving waters of Holy Scripture and take refuge in them from the attacks of the devil.

¹ After St Thomas's *Summa Theologica*.

² Translated by Stephen Deacon. It is hoped to publish subsequently in LIFE OF THE SPIRIT some chapters of this very illuminating little book, 'L'Art et la Grace' (Les Editions Nouvelles: Paris) of which this is the introduction.

Prompted by instinct, or perhaps by intelligence, thou chooseth the best grains for thy feeding. I too have need, as we all have, to choose the best thoughts for the nourishment of my mind.

But thou dost not think of thyself alone; thou nourishest the fledglings of other birds as well. Oh, may the gift of Counsel inspire the artist, thy foster-child, and all who hear him. May he be as thou art, destroying nothing of the deposit of Faith, without bitterness, singing while he groans in his misery and finding joy in his lamentations.

But above all, thou who makest thy nest in the rocks, teach us to make our home in the wounds of Christ who is the one rock in which all our hope must abide.

Do thou then, living reality yet at the same time symbol of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in Baptism, not only recall to our minds the miraculous effects of a few drops of Holy Water on our foreheads, but remind us also that the artist and the Christian are not separate individuals. The Holy Ghost creates unity.

Una est colomba mea says the Song of Songs. When we read these words we think of the Church. Thou, little dove, livest in flocks and lovest to love. May this work undertaken under thy wing have these same virtues. We go before God without pretences, as simple as thou art who hast no guile; such is the advice of St Matthew; and your sweetness reminds us that we are free because our stains have been washed away by the healing waters.

There is no more to do now but to offer, as thou dost, the best of ourselves, the best of our efforts, of our work and our thoughts to our fellow-men and to seek our rest and our comfort in Love.