

ARRIVAL AND FIRST DAYS IN MALTA OF  
ANTHONY PIGNATELLI  
INQUISITOR AND APOSTOLIC DELEGATE

THE NOMINATION AND JOURNEY TO MALTA

It was a period when it was extremely difficult to govern. The Grand Master of the Knights of St. John could hardly think of a way in which he could gain the respect of the members of the Order themselves. The Diocese of Malta was groaning for her Bishop's insufficient care. The natives of the island had lost their confidence in the Apostolic Ministers. In that precarious situation, the Roman Pontiff *Innocent X* (1644-1655) chose for Malta a new Inquisitor and Apostolic Delegate in the person of Anthony Pignatelli.

Anthony Pignatelli, a Neapolitan of noble origin,<sup>1</sup> the future Vicar of Christ, that bore the name of *Innocent XII* (1691-1700),<sup>2</sup> accepted to come to Malta to fill the vacancy left by the departure of Mgr. John

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G.A. Vallone, *Le oscuratissime satire di Perseo... con la vera origine di due case illustrissime: Colonna e Pignatelli*, Napoli, Cacchio, 1576.

C. De Lellis, *Discorsi delle Famiglie Nobili di Napoli*, Napoli, Savio, II (1663), pp. 88s.

F. Aragona Pignatelli Cortes, *Innocenzo XII, Papa Pignatelli e la sua famiglia*, Napoli, Forense, 1946, 20p.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. P. Gauchat, OFMConv., *Hierarchia Catholica*, Münster, 1935, v. 4, p. 216.

O. Panvinio, *Storia delle vite di Pontefici*, (v. II nell'opera di B. Platina), Venezia, Savioni, 1730, pp. 837-853.

L. Pastor, *Storia dei Papi dalla fine del Medio Evo*, v. 14 (1644-1700), t. 2, Roma, Desclée, 1962, pp. 420-422.

Many years later, in 1691, when Anthony Pignatelli was chosen as a Roman Pontiff, in Malta great celebrations commemorated the event. They were held, not only in Valletta and Mdina, as it was usual on the election of a new Pope, but also in Vittoriosa, which Anthony Pignatelli had previously honoured with his presence as an Inquisitor. In a letter of the Pro-Inquisitor Louis Famucelli, we read as follows: 'Per tre sere continue si sonò fatti i fuochi d'allegranza, con il sparo di gran numero di mortaletti, non solo nella città Valletta, ma anche nella Vittoriosa, per esser stata la Santità Sua Inquisitore in quest' Isola per duoi anni e quattro mesi': A.S.V., S.S. *Malta*, 42, f. 32r-v.

Baptist Gori Pannellini (1639-1646).<sup>3</sup>

Pignatelli was nominated as Inquisitor in the month of September 1646,<sup>4</sup> but he did not leave immediately for Malta. Shortly after Gori's departure from the Island, the Roman Chancery prepared the usual three Briefs for a Maltese Inquisitor: the first one is dated 24th October 1646, and the other two carry the date of the 26th October 1646.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, Cardinal Pamphili, the Pontifical Secretary of State, on October 24th, wrote a letter to recommend the newly appointed Inquisitor to the Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris Castellar (1636-1657). In that letter, the Cardinal explicitly proclaimed his high esteem of Pignatelli.<sup>6</sup>

The Briefs, at the end of October, were handed to Pignatelli.<sup>7</sup> But, then, he left Rome without carrying with him the instructions which the Holy See used to give to each Inquisitor.<sup>8</sup> At the time of his appointment to that new office, Pignatelli was a Vice-Legate for the city and state of Urbino.<sup>9</sup> After few years of practice in diplomacy, though still a very young Prelate, the Pope, seeing him fit for a diplomatic career,

<sup>3</sup> Alex. Bonnici, OFMConv., *A bad reputation for the Maltese Inquisition under Mgr. John Baptist Gori Pannellini (1639-1646)* in *M.H.*, v.6, n.1 (1972), pp. 50-59.

P. Piccolomini, *Corrispondenza tra la Corte di Roma e l'Inquisitore di Malta durante la guerra di Candia* in *A.S.I.*, t.41 (1908), pp. 55.

<sup>4</sup> In a letter of the Secretary of State destined to Mgr. Gori, and dated 8th September, 1646, we read: 'Havendo la Santità di Nostro Signore destinato successore a Vostra Signoria in cotesta carica Monsignor Pignatelli, io ne do a Lei quest'avviso': *A.S.V., S.S. Malta*, 82, f. 20v.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, *Secr. Brev.*, 1015, ff. 701r-707r.

<sup>6</sup> 'Da Monsignor Pignatelli... mi fu resa... l'humanissima lettera di Vostra Eminenza delli 24 d'Ottobre... della stima che l'Eminenza Vostra dichiara di tenere la sua persona': *R.M.L., Arch.*, 1424, Letter to Cardinal Pamphili, 29th Dec. 1646.

<sup>7</sup> In a letter of Grand Master Lascaris, we find that the Brief of Pignatelli was dated October 29th; but, undoubtedly, it is an error on the Grand Master's part. Lascaris had just given a look at the Brief and handed it back to the Inquisitor; so, the error is possible: 'Monsignor Pignatelli... fu, in arrivando quà la settimana passata, ad esibirmi il suo benignissimo Breve delli 29 d'Ottobre': *R.M.L., Arch.*, 1424, Letter of Lascaris to Pope Innocent X, 29th Dec. 1646.

<sup>8</sup> 'Non essendosi consegnata a Vostra Signoria nella sua partenza di quà l'istruzione solita darsi a chi esercita la carica d'Inquisitore in Malta...': *A.S.V., S.S. Malta*, 82, ff. 20v-21r.

<sup>9</sup> Panvinio, *o.c.*, *ib.*, p. 837.

decided to nominate him for the first time as his Legate. Then, he was only thirty years old.

According to the Canon Law of that time, no one could be elected as an Inquisitor without being at least forty years of age. In Malta, however, it was not rare to see a Prelate at the head of the Holy Office without reaching that age; but it was not an exception because the Inquisitors of Malta were elected by the Pope himself. Infact, in the age-norm, we find added: '*unless nominated by the Pope*'.<sup>10</sup> For the young Prelates, the Inquisition in Malta served as an experiment of ability in diplomacy. Most of them, after few years, passed on to higher offices in the service of the Holy See.

Ordinarily, the new Inquisitor embarked in Civitavecchia. When he crossed the sea on the galleys of the Pope, he did not pay any expenses neither for himself nor for his retinue. Usually, however, he gave a donation to the captains and officials of the boat.<sup>11</sup> At that time, normally, the trip from Civitavecchia to Malta took from ten to fifteen days. Nevertheless, the Inquisitor's steward used to provide for about one month because various reasons could delay the arrival. Not rarely, the Inquisitors had to endure the hardships of a long trip for a month or even more. On account of contrary winds or rough seas, at times, the Inquisitors had to suspend the voyage, and tarry even on a desert coast.<sup>12</sup> We came across records of Journeys which were incredibly long; for instance, the Inquisitor Frederick Borromeo (1653-1654) got

<sup>10</sup>H. Plettenberg, SJ, *Notitiae Congregationum et Tribunalium Curiae Romanae*, pp. 601-602.

<sup>11</sup>'Havendo congiuntura di navigare su le Pontificie, non soggiace a spesa veruna, né per sé, né per la sua fameglia, ben che poi, secondo la propria generosità, soglia regalare li capi e li ufficiali; ma quella delle galere per avventura mancandoli, e convenendoli andare sopra feluche, ogni spesa e provvisione a lui tocca, potendo però questa venirli in certo modo contracambiata dal più sollecito arrivo': *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, parte 2, f. 308r.

<sup>12</sup>'Nelle medesime feluche ... può portarsi ... per un viaggio di un mese almeno, poichè, se bene il viaggio da Roma in Malta può farsi in dieci o quindici giorni, ad ogni modo ciò dipende dalla qualità della stagione e de tempi che regnano, occorrendo molte volte, per la contrarietà di venti, fermarsi per necessità molti giorni in una nuda spiaggia': *Bibl. Naz. Roma, Vitt. Eman.*, 838, *Istruzioni per il Maestro di Camera del Prelato*, (ff. 2v-3r). [These Instructions are not numbered; but, to render this consultation possible, we give our own numeration].

to Malta fifty days after the day of his departure from Rome.<sup>13</sup>

Some Inquisitors, on their way to Malta, out of curiosity or necessity, stopped in Naples. Pignatelli surely did. He was of a noble Neapolitan origin. His lineage, though divided into many branches, still dwells in that city. Pignatelli knew that he could not leave his Island before the end of his term of office. So, he could not miss that occasion of a few days of rest. In Naples, as an Inquisitor, he was obliged to visit the Viceroy and the Cardinal Archbishop, who usually offered him free lodging.<sup>14</sup>

Towards the end of November, Pignatelli embarked for Messina. Undoubtedly, he reached Messina by 2nd December 1646, where the galleys of the Knights waited in the harbour and were preparing to head for Malta.<sup>15</sup> Whenever an Inquisitor stopped in that sicilian city, he was normally the guest of the Archbishop.<sup>16</sup> Since Pignatelli had not taken with him the instructions, Cardinal Pamphili, on November 17th, arranged to have them sent over to him.<sup>17</sup> The Inquisitor received them before embarking from Messina to Malta.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup>The Inquisitor Frederick Borromeo, on the 28th February 1653, in a letter to the Secretary of State, complained about the length of his voyage: 'Alla sollecita sodisfattione di questo debito, mi è stata contraria la qualità del viaggio, che, prolungato da gli accidenti del tempo e dell'affari che in ciaschedun porto havendo li comandanti delle galere, me n'ha differito il termine sin al cinquantesimo giorno da che partii di costi': A.S.V., S.S. *Malta*, 9, f. 6r.

<sup>14</sup>'Quando la curiosità o l'urgenza di qualche negotio l'induchi a fermarsi per qualche giorno in Napoli, passando da quella parte, può vedere che, penetrandolo il Nuntio, sarà da lui alloggiato': Bibl. Vat., *Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. 2, f. 308r.

As a confirmation of this custom, in reference to Inquisitor Julius Degli Oddi, confer: Aless. Bonnici, OFMConv., *Giulio Degli Oddi contro Martino de Redin in Annales de l'O.S.M. de Malte*, v. 28 (1970), p. 94.

<sup>15</sup>'In Messina, dove sto di prossimo attendendo l'imbarco sopra le galere di Malta, che già si trovano in questo porto, per condurmi speditamente in quell'Isola': A.S.V., S.S. *Malta*, 7, f. 129r.

<sup>16</sup>'Il medesimo prelato... fu da quel Vescovo (di Siracusa) visitato, che l'haverebbe anco alloggiato, quando vi si fusse fermato, come a punto fece l'Arcivescovo di Messina': Bibl. Vat., *Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. 2, f. 308r-v.

Cf. Aless. Bonnici, *Giulio Degli Oddi contro Martino De Redin*, *ib.*

<sup>17</sup>The Secretary of State wrote to Pignatelli: 'Io gliela mando qui aggiunta': A.S.V., S.S. *Malta*, 82, f. 21r.

<sup>18</sup>'La sua benignissima lettera delli 17 del caduto mi sovraggiunge qui in Messina': *ib.*, 7, f. 129r.

Because of rough seas and contrary winds, Pignatelli could not enjoy his trip. But then, after another two weeks, on the 17th December, he joyfully and healthily entered the Maltese harbour on the galleys of the Order.<sup>19</sup>

#### THE ARRIVAL AND THE OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE GRAND MASTER

Usually, before reaching his palace, the new Inquisitor met the officials of the Holy Tribunal. His palace at Vittoriosa had to be appropriately prepared for him and for all his retinue. In the meantime, the Pro-Inquisitor, who had taken charge of the inquisitorial duties up to the arrival of the new Inquisitor, used to invite the Apostolic Minister to visit some important places on the Island.<sup>20</sup>

As soon as he got to his palace at Vittoriosa, the Inquisitor had the strict obligation to take possession of all the documents left by his predecessor: especially those that concerned the pending trials. It was his duty to keep the inventory of the correspondence with the Roman Congregations, and anything that referred to the Inquisitor's palace, prisons, and possessions safe under lock and key.<sup>21</sup> He was also bound

<sup>19</sup> 'Dopo un lungo trattenimento di viaggio accagionato della contrarietà de tempi scorsi, mi trovo giunto finalmente con salute in Malta': *Ib.*, f. 130r.

'Non passarono molti giorni che 'l Mar. de los Velez Vice Re di Sicilia richiese la comodità di queste galere per fare la visita delle fortezze d'Augusta, di Siracusa, e d'altre di quel Regno, per il che fattene allestire 4, partirono nel seguente Novembre sotto il nuovo Generale San Iey per Messina, dove arrivarono inutilmente, per non essersi trovato il Vice Re pronto a fare quella visita: onde sé ne tornarono di Dicembre a Malta, portandovi il numero (!) Inquisitore Monsignor Antonio Pignatelli che successe a Monsignor Gori': B. Dal Pozzo, *Historia della Sacra Religione Militare di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano detta di Malta*, v. 2, Venezia, Albrizzi, 1715, p. 140.

About the date of arrival: 'Monsignor Inquisitore Pignatelli, che giunse qua alli 17, con buona salute': R.M.L., *Arch.* 1424, Grand Master Lascaris to the Ambassador Altieri, 29th Dec. 1646.

<sup>20</sup> 'È solito che prima di arrivare (nel proprio Palazzo) venga incontrato dalli ufficiali di quel Tribunale, e che giunto al suo Palazzo, ch'egli trova provisto delle cose necessarie per sé stesso e sua fameglia, sintanto che giungano dallo sbarco le sue proprie, venga invitato di più posti dal Pro-Inquisitore, che ordinariamente si lascia soprintendente alla carica dall'Inquisitore che parte': *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. 2, f. 308v.

<sup>21</sup> Cardinal Millino instructs the Inquisitor Evangelista Carbonese, through a letter dated 26th March 1614, how to introduce his successor to the new office: 'Però Vostra Signoria l'ammetta al libero essercitio di esso con darli

to inform the Grand Master of his arrival without any delay.<sup>22</sup>

When Pignatelli landed in Malta, Grand Master Lascaris happened to be in his Palace at Buskett. The Inquisitor, on his own part, was determined to go and pay him a visit even there; but, on the same day, the Grand Master's Chamberlain came to welcome the new Inquisitor in the name of his Lord. He reverently assured him that the Grand Master would be pleased if the Inquisitor would not take the trouble to go so far to visit him, because he was about to be back as soon as possible.<sup>23</sup> Usually, the Grand Master's squire had the honour to welcome the Inquisitor and agree upon the official visit; but, on that occasion, he was out of the Convent, on a galley of which he was the captain.<sup>24</sup>

According to the Ritual of the Holy Office, the Inquisitor, as a sign of reverence, never publicly received any person before visiting the Grand Master officially. If he had to wait for some days to accomplish that duty, as it happened in the case of Pignatelli, the Inquisitor, while furnishing his Palace with anything that might be necessary, used to

piena instruzione delle cause et negotii pendenti, del modo di trattare, e delle prerogative delle cause dell'ufficio e di tutto quello che giudicherà espediente': A.I.M., *Corrispondenza*, 3 (1613-1618), f. 83r.

Through the instructions that in 1654 were to be handed to Inquisitor Stephen Brancacci, we read: 'Per la buona direttione poi del Tribunale, di sui subito che sarà giunta a Malta vi farà consegnare da chi Monsignor Borromeo avrà al suo partire sostituito in suo luogo, per inventario la nota dei processi, delle scritture, dei mobili, e delle suppellettili della casa e delle prigioni, che si dovrà da Lei a suo tempo riconsegnare al suo successore': Bibl. Linc. Roma, Ms. 35, C. 3, f. 103r.

<sup>22</sup> Manda un suo gentiluomo in abito da città, il suo Assessore o altro suo Ministro Particolare, a dar [Nel Ms. 'dal'] parte del suo arrivo al Gran Maestro, riserbandogli a farlo poi in persona subito che gli sarà permesso': R.M.L., *Library*, 8, *Dell'Inquisitore di Malta*, f. 327r. (A transcription from *Dell'Inquisitore di Malta* by Agostino Paradisi, printed in Venice, in 1713).

<sup>23</sup> 'Havendo arrivato sotto le decissette del medesimo mese con le galere che venevano da Sicilia, et ritrovandosi Sua Eminenza nel Boschetto, volse detto Monsignor andar subito colà per visitarla; però, venendo il medesimo giorno da parte di detta Eminenza il Mastro di Casa a dargli la ben venuta... disse al sopradetto Monsignore che detta Eminenza haverebbe a caro che non pigliasse quella incommodità, stante che quanto prima sarebbe di ritorno': R.M.L., *Arch*, 258, f. 72v.

<sup>24</sup> '... per ritrovarsi il cavallerizzo solito far questa funtione fuori di Convento con la galera di cui era capitano': *ib.*

take secret informations about the reigning Grand Master.<sup>25</sup>

Four days elapsed from the arrival of Pignatelli in Malta until the Grand Master was back at Valletta. For that reason, the Inquisitor decided to fulfill his duty towards him. Since the Apostolic Minister usually dwelled in Vittoriosa, he had to cross the Grand Harbour that separated him from Valletta. Considering, however, that he did not go to the city very frequently, each Inquisitor preferred not to have his own boat. One of the many boat-men, that daily earned their living by carrying passengers between the two cities, used to be also for his service.<sup>26</sup>

As a sign of esteem towards the Inquisitor, the Grand Master used to send one of his own carriages to carry him from the harbour to the Magisterial Palace.<sup>27</sup> On the 21st December 1646,<sup>28</sup> Anthony Pignatelli was introduced before the Grand Master, wearing a rochet and a cape (mantelletta) longer than the ordinary one, accompanied by the Lieutenant, Grand-Cross Knights, and many others.<sup>29</sup> Pignatelli was welcomed according to the ceremonies in vigour since the arrival of his predecessor Mgr. Lewis Serristori on the 12th October 1630.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> 'L'Inquisitore non riceve visite pubbliche, se prima non è stato in persona a riverire il Gran Maestro. Intanto, prendendo riposo, fa allestire ed addobbare la casa, prende informazione si della natura e genio del Gran Maestro regnante che delle persone sue confidenti e Ministri principali': *Ib.*, *Libr.*, 8, f. 327v.

<sup>26</sup> 'Convieni però per andare alla città tanto il Padrone quanto li servitori di servirsi delle barche comuni del passo': *Bibl. Naz. Roma, Vitt. Eman.*, 838, *Instrutt. al Mastro di Camera* (f. 4v).

<sup>27</sup> 'Se arriva di sera, manda la matina seguente a dar del parte suo arrivo al Gran Mastro et a chiedere l'udienza, che se gli suole senza dilatione concedere da quello, il quale ad ogni richiesta dell'Inquisitore, e massime per occasione di udienze o di visite, fa essere all'ordine una delle sue carrozze (non usandola ivi l'Inquisitore), che si trova pronta allo sbarcatore della città della Valletta': *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. 2, f. 308v.

<sup>28</sup> 'Die vigesima prima mensis Decembris 1646. Nota come hoggi doppo vespro è stato Monsignor Illustrissimo Don Antonio Pignatelli nuovo Inquisitore a visitare l'Eminentissimo e Reverendissimo Signor Gran Maestro': *R.M.L., Arch.*, *Lib. Conc. Stat.*, 258, f. 72v.

<sup>29</sup> 'Viene dunque introdotto dal Gran Mastro in suo habito prelatitio di rocchetto, mantelletta': *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. 2, f. 308v. Cf. *R.M.L., Library*, 8, f. 329v.

<sup>30</sup> 'Fu ricevuto con le cerimonie et accoglienze solite et osservate sotto li 12 d'ottobre 1630 con Monsignor Seristori': *R.M.L., Arch.*, 258, f. 72v.

On his admission in the Grand Master's hall, Mgr. Pignatelli immediately handed him the Papal Brief and a letter of recommendation from the Cardinal Secretary of State. All the ceremony was accompanied with words that the Inquisitor deemed convenient and suitable for the occasion.<sup>31</sup> Few days later, in one of his many letters, the Inquisitor referred to the affection and honour bestowed on him by the Grand Master during the official visit.<sup>32</sup>

It is a well known fact that normally Grand Masters and Inquisitors were not on good terms. The Grand Master, however, knew perfectly well that he had to endure patiently the presence of an Apostolic Minister. On the arrival of Pignatelli, Grand Master Lascaris, in his external signs of affection, was more or less sincere because, after the unpleasant experience of Mgr. Gori's inquisitorship,<sup>33</sup> he was hopefully waiting for a change. At least, the Grand Master was glad that a new Prelate was invested with that dignity.

Lascaris was sincere because he made known his satisfaction even to others. We can put aside the letter that he wrote to the Pope where necessarily he had to express his pleasure.<sup>34</sup> The letter, however, sent to Altieri, the Ambassador of the Order in Rome, is worthy of consideration. He informed Altieri of Pignatelli's official visit; besides, the Grand Master added that he had noticed from the very beginning that the new Inquisitor was highly worthy of the dignity conferred upon

<sup>31</sup> 'All'humilissima parte che n'invio a Vostra Eminenza aggiungo anche l'altra d'esser stato già da questo Eminentissimo Gran Maestro, e di haver al medesimo presentato il Breve di Nostro Signore e la lettera dell'Eminenza Vostra, et accompagnato l'una e l'altra con le parole che ho stimato più adeguate all'attione': A.S.V., S.S. *Malta*, 7, f. 130r.

'Monsignor Pignatelli, mandato da Vostra Santità ad esercitar in quest'isola il carico d'Inquisitore, fu, in arrivando qua la settimana passata, ad esibirmi il suo benignissimo Breve delli 29 d'ottobre': R.M.L., *Arch.* 1424, Lascaris to the Pope, 29th Dec. 1646.

<sup>32</sup> '... con haver riportato da Sua Eminenza una divota espressione di sensi ossequiosissimi verso la Sua Santità e di vera osservanza verso l'Eminenza Vostra et in me stesso trattamenti di molto affetto et honore': A.S.V., S.S. *Malta*, 7, f. 130r.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Alex. Bonnici, *A bad reputation for the Maltese Inquisition under Mgr. John Baptist Gori Pannellini (1639-1646)* in *M.H.*, v. 6, n. 1 (1972), pp. 50-59.

<sup>34</sup> 'Non senza mio grandissimo contento': R.M.L., *Arch.* 1424, Lascaris to the Pope, 29th Dec. 1646.



him.<sup>35</sup> Lascaris seemed sorry that, on account of his ill health, for the next few days, he could not see Mgr. Pignatelli. He hoped to see him as soon as possible to discuss with him some problems of jurisdiction about which a solution was expected by the Holy See.<sup>36</sup>

#### AN INQUISITOR THAT INSPIRED TRUST

As soon as Pignatelli began his work in Malta, the Grand Master did not cease to nourish a glowing hope to find in him assistance against the inconveniences that were causing trouble in the Order. Lascaris was getting very old and, consequently, he was feeling a sense of weariness. For that reason, he was expecting plenty of help from the Inquisitor. One of the problems that caused a certain uneasiness in Malta and restricted within narrow limits the sovereignty of the Order was the ample immunity which recently had been granted to the churches in Malta.<sup>37</sup> The Grand Master's hope was to have everything re-examined by Pignatelli, and to ask for his help that he might sum up all scattered informative elements as he had been urged to do by the Pope himself. The Knights had a feeling of trust that Pignatelli would be able to administer the suitable treatment by restricting the privilege of immunity just to the parish churches.<sup>38</sup> For the Grand Master, it would be less complicated to have his craving desire satisfied through the Inquisitor because he had learned from experience that the Sacred Congregation of Immunity was too rigid in favouring the Order in anything which had to do with its competence.<sup>39</sup>

On the same occasion, Lascaris wrote also to the Pope himself and

<sup>35</sup> 'Molto degno del carico impostogli da Nostro Signore': *Ib.*, Lascaris to Ambassador Altieri, 29th Dec. 1646.

<sup>36</sup> 'Piacque al Signor Iddio di visitarci con un puoco di indispositione che ci ha impediti di poterlo più vedere ... Procureremo di rivederlo quanto prima ... in difesa della nostra giurisdizione, alla quale non siamo per consentire in modo alcuno che sia pregiudicato': *Ib.*

<sup>37</sup> 'Lasciando libera la nostra Religione da cose che tanto la perturbano come fa pure la si larga immunità delle chiese, introdotta da pochi anni in questa parte': *Ib.*, Lascaris to Agent Rosa, 29th Dec. 1646.

<sup>38</sup> 'Desideriamo infinitamente che, venendo da Monsignore Inquisitore Pignatelli le informazioni, che se gli sono incaricate di prenderne, la somma benignità et autorità di Nostro Signore si degnasse di dare l'opportuno rimedio col restringerla alle parochiali': *Ib.*

<sup>39</sup> 'Senza rimetterci a cotesta Sagra Congregatione, troppa rigorosa sempre in affari di questa sorte': *Ib.*

to Cardinal Pamphili. There again, the Grand Master referred to the honourable reception of the new Delegate of the Holy See.<sup>40</sup> Once more, while exalting the dignity and merits of his person, he promised to increase his deep respect towards him, and to bestow on him his favours also for the time yet to come.<sup>41</sup> Here, however, there is no need to explain that Lascaris, in that letter, had always a mental reservation clear in his mind: the Inquisitor would be revered by the Knights only if he would be on good terms with them. Notwithstanding, this, during the time of Pignatelli, those promises were more or less maintained. The Grand Master and Pignatelli usually cooperated with each other in the execution of their duties.<sup>42</sup> Although all those promises were the ordinary polite expressions of courtesy of any subject towards his superior, the concluding words of Grand Master Lascaris' letter are truly noteworthy. He knew that the Pope did not give any credit just to plain words, but only to concrete facts. Hence, he closed his letter by affirming that Pignatelli himself, during his stay in Malta, would be the eye-witness of the Grand Master's behaviour.<sup>43</sup>

#### FIRST STEPS OF INQUISITORIAL ACTIVITY

The main duty of the Maltese Inquisitor, in the mind of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office, ought to be the preservation of the Christian Faith on the Island and the consolidation of the inhabitants in their obedience to the Holy See.<sup>44</sup> For that reason, the Inquisitor was

<sup>40</sup>'Egli ricevè da me tutti gl'honori dovuti ad un Ministro della Santità Vostra': *Ib.*, Lascaris to the Pope, 29th Dec. 1646.

'Egli fu ricevuto da me come Ministro Apostolico': *Ib.*, Lascaris to Card. Pamphili, 29th Dec. 1646.

<sup>41</sup>'Corresponderanno pur anche tutti gl'altri che sarò per fargli in avvenire': *Ib.*, Lascaris to Card. Pamphili, 29th Dec. 1646.

'Non lascerò di continuarglieli pure in ogn'altra occasione': *Ib.*, Lascaris to the Pope, 29th Dec. 1646.

<sup>42</sup>'In quello che riguarda il suo officio acciò possa ben amministrarlo, io sarò prontissimo ancor sempre a prestargli tutto l'aiuto, che può uscire dall'autorità mia': *Ib.*

<sup>43</sup>'Vorrò nondimeno che lo stesso Monsignore sia buon testimonio del proceder mio in questa parte': *Ib.*

<sup>44</sup>'L'oggetto principale del suo ministero ha di essere il mantenere cotesta Religione e Isola nella purità della Fede Catholica et nell'obbedienza dovuta a questa S. Sede': Bibl. Vat., *Borg. Lat.*, 558, Instrutt. a Gori, f. 84v. Cf. V. Borg, *Fabio Chigi, Apostolic Delegate in Malta*, C.V. 1967, p. 4.

bound to exercise his full authority. Most of the facts that we have mentioned refer to official ceremonies; but their only reason was to keep him always highly esteemed in Malta. In his Inquisitorial functions, all the inhabitants of Malta depended on him.

We do not possess any records about Pignatelli's application of what was customary in the Holy Office. But other documents confirm that he faithfully fulfilled his duty as a Minister of the Holy See. Undoubtedly, he never failed to be dutiful especially in what was essentially inherent to his office. Each Maltese Inquisitor, soon after his arrival, published the Bull of Julius III *Licet ex adversis*, that of Pius V *Si de protegendis*, and another one of Gregory XV against those who proved to be guilty of solicitation in the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>45</sup> The aim of those publications, on the arrival of each new Inquisitor, was to put a remedy against all evil-doers, at least through the dread of ecclesiastical penalties and censures.<sup>46</sup>

Pignatelli sternly and mildly at the same time proceeded against those who were guilty of anything mentioned in those Bulls.<sup>47</sup> Here, however, it is interesting to mention an edict of this Inquisitor against some abuses which had been introduced in Malta. Some wealthy persons used to be attended by a retinue of Moslem or Hebrew slaves even in the church during the liturgical functions.<sup>48</sup> The fact was becoming a

<sup>45</sup> 'E per dar principio a gli atti del Tribunale con decoro e terrore dei miscredenti, farà subito pubblicare il solito editto della Santa Inquisitione, la Bolla della santa memoria di Giulio 3<sup>o</sup> che comincia '*Licet ex adversis*', quelle di Pio V che comincia '*Si de protegendis*', e di Gregorio XV contra i sollecitanti': Bibl. Linc. Roma, ms. 35, C. 3, f. 103r.

<sup>46</sup> 'Rinovata d'esse la memoria gl'uni s'astengano almeno per terrore delle pene dai delitti, e gli altri s'inducano per sottrarsi alle censure et adempire il loro obbligo alle denuntie, le quali dovranno essere ricevute da Vostra Signoria': *ib.*

<sup>47</sup> Pignatelli's activity as an Inquisitor of Malta needs a whole treatise by itself. It is our intention to publish articles about every aspect of this Apostolic Minister's activity in future studies. Just as an example of the Inquisition proceedings during the period of Pignatelli, see: Alex. Bonnici, OFMConv., *Superstitions in Malta towards the middle of the seventeenth century in the light of the Inquisition trials in M.H.*, v. 4, n. 3 (1966), pp. 145-183.

<sup>48</sup> 'Con publico scandalo s'intende che tanto le persone onorate, quanto di mala vita tengono nelle Chiese al tempo di divini officii le loro schiave infedeli vestite e coperte con manti come loro stesse': A.I.M., *Processi*, 61, n. 154, f. 813r.

widespread scandal because it was commonly held that those infidels, not only did not believe in or understand our Holy Mysteries, but also made fun of them.<sup>49</sup> On account of that, Pignatelli, in the fullness of his authority as an Inquisitor, published an Edict against those who were abusing in that respect. He forbade all persons of any dignity from taking the Moslem and Hebrew slaves with them into the church during the Divine Services.<sup>50</sup> The penalty was extended to the slaves themselves because they were threatened to be publicly whipped if they failed to obey the edict.<sup>51</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

This is the promising beginning of Mgr. Pignatelli's activity in Malta. He was not a great Inquisitor. He often tried to devise impediments and difficulties to release himself from that office in Malta.<sup>52</sup> He earnestly desired higher positions and dignities far away from Malta.<sup>53</sup> But, in carrying out his duties, Pignatelli was more than satisfactory.

After Gori's unhappy term of office, the Pope feared that the new Inquisitor would not be welcomed in Malta. When, instead, it was referred to His Holiness that the Inquisitor had been received with great joy,

<sup>49</sup> '... gl'hebrei et infedeli che non credino né intendono così grandi misterii, anzi tal volta se ne burlano': *Ib.*

<sup>50</sup> '... comandando ad ogni e qualunque persona ecclesiastica e secolare di qualsiasi stato, grado, sesso, e conditione, e della Sacra Religione Gerosolimitana che non debbano lasciar dimorare nelle chiese durante il tempo del Sacrificio della Santa Messa e Divini Officii i loro schiavi infedeli o Hebrei, homini e donne': *Ib.*

<sup>51</sup> 'Dechiariamo che si procederà ancora contro gl'infedeli medesimi alla pena della frusta in caso della sudetta contraventione': *Ib.*

<sup>52</sup> 'Esperimento così aria contraria alla mia salute, la qualità di quest'aria in tempo d'estate che non potrei assicurarmi di passarvene un'altra senza evidente pericolo di perderla affatto': A.S.V., S.S. *Malta*, 7, f. 186r.

'Questa aria riusciva alla mia complessione notabilmente molesta': *Ib.*, f. 217r.

'Nulla di meno, vedendo accrescermi tuttavia con la dimora in quest'aere maggiori l'evidenze degl'accennati pericoli, sono costretto di palesarmi di nuovo molesto all'Eminenza Vostra': *Ib.*, f. 198r.

<sup>53</sup> 'Per gl'inditii che ne porgono le instanti congiunture, si va probabilmente argumentando che Nostro Signore sia per risolversi di mandar Nunzio in Fian-dra. Io considero molto bene che potrà sembrare forse intempestiva la mia pre-tensione di far passaggio da questa alla sudetta carica, ma però non dubito d'esserne tacciato in riguardo alla scarsezza notissima d'impieghi': *Ib.*, f. 166r.

not only by the Grand Master, but also by the Knights, Pope Innocent X expressed his deep pleasure and satisfaction.<sup>54</sup> On that occasion, the Pope could not hide any longer his worries for the Holy Tribunal in Malta. When the choice fell on Anthony Pignatelli, it had not happened by chance.

After Gori's departure from Malta, the Pope, remembering especially that the Knights themselves had threatened to murder the Inquisitor,<sup>55</sup> pondered for a long time before choosing a suitable person. He was glad that Pignatelli corresponded to his expectations. His only fear was that the premature praise from the Knights might in the time turn into bitter hatred.<sup>56</sup>

From the very beginning, Pignatelli tried to soften, through gentle manners the hatred engendered in Malta against his predecessor.<sup>57</sup> He

<sup>54</sup> 'Rappresentai insieme gl'honori che Vostra Eminenza haveva fatto al Medesimo Monsignore in riguardo della Santità Sua e la gran sodisfattione che assieme con Vostra Eminenza haveva ricevuto tutto il Convento nel suo primo ingresso': R.M.L., *Arch.* 1273, Ambassador G. Altieri to Lascaris, 9th Febr. 1647.

<sup>55</sup> 'Sono in obbligo dar conto a Vostra Eminenza d'esser stato segretamente avisato che diversi Cavalieri habbin resolutto di levarmi la vita per haver fatto carcerare delle loro meretrici': A.S.V., *S.S. Malta*, 7, f. 127r.

Cf. Alex. Bonnici, *A bad reputation for the Maltese Inquisition, l.c.*, p. 53.

<sup>56</sup> 'Godeva molto che dopo d'haver pensato per longo tempo per sciegliere soggetto a proposito per cotesta carica, tale fosse riuscito e stimato da Vostra Eminenza, quale egli tal'era figurato, e che sperava che ogni giorno maggiormente Vostra Eminenza dovesse restarne sodisfatta': R.M.L., *Arch.* 1273, Altieri to Lascaris, 9th Febr. 1647.

<sup>57</sup> 'Monsignor Antonio Pignatelli, Napolitano dell'una e l'altra signatura, fu da Papa Innocenzo X inviato Inquisitore in Malta nel 1646, essendo Gran Maestro Fr. Gio. Paolo Lascaris Castellar, ed arrivò li 17 Ottobre 1646 (?) con quattro galere di questa Gerosolimitana Religione, e dal principio che gionse fece raddolcire l'odiosità del predecessore. con le scavi sue maniere; rimase poco più del biennio in questa carica e parti li 23 aprile 1649': *Ib.*, *Libr.* 8, ff. 215v-216r.

<sup>58</sup> 'Havro caro oltremodo... ad esibirle insieme attestati sempre nuovi della stima particolare che conservo del merito suo': *Ib.*, *Arch.* 1427, Lascaris to Pignatelli (after his departure from the Island), 12th July 1649.

<sup>59</sup> 'Dal principio che gionse fece raddolcire l'odiosità del predecessore'. *Ib.*, *Libr.*, 8, f. 216r.

<sup>60</sup> The Secretary of State, on 27th Febr. 1649, wrote to Pignatelli: 'Io, nel darne a Vostra Signoria questo avviso l'accompagno ancora con l'attestatione che le faccio della molta sodisfattione che Sua Santità ha ricevuta da Lei nel essercitio di cotesta carica': A.S.V., *S.S. Malta*, 82, f. 29r.

learned to face his difficulties with courage, to exercise justice with prudence and moderation, and to judge without any passion. Besides, though suffering from a delicate physical constitution, up to the time of his departure from Malta, in 1649, he continued to be admired by the Knights,<sup>58</sup> by the people of Malta,<sup>59</sup> and by the Holy See itself.<sup>60</sup>

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Arch.</i>	: Archivum
<i>A.I.M.</i>	: Archivum Inquisitionis Melitensis
<i>A.S.I.</i>	: Archivio Storico Italiano
<i>A.S.V.</i>	: Archivum Secretum Vaticanum
<i>Bibl. Linc.</i>	: Biblioteca dei Lincei
<i>Bibl. Naz.</i>	: Biblioteca Nazionale
<i>Bibl. Vat.</i>	: Biblioteca Vaticana
<i>Borg. Lat.</i>	: Borgia Latino
<i>C.V.</i>	: Città del Vaticano
<i>f.</i>	: Folium
<i>Libr.</i>	: Library
<i>M.H.</i>	: Melita Historica
<i>Ottob. Lat.</i>	: Ottoboniani Latino
<i>r.</i>	: Rectum
<i>R.M.L.</i>	: Royal Malta Library
<i>S.S.</i>	: Secretaria Status
<i>v.</i>	: Versum
<i>Vitt. Eman.</i>	: Vittorio Emanuele