# 852

## John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius| (1)[309]

San Angelo

June 12, 1753

*J.C.P.*

Dear Beloved Father Rector,

For some time I have been awaiting your letters. Now I thank the Lord that last night I received one. I rejoice in the Lord over the good that the Mercy of God accomplished through you in Bassiano and Sermoneta, as well as the good you accomplished in Terracina, since I have been hoping that little by little this territory would be cultivated. But you know that such a ground left to go wild needs long care to make it fruitful. "Neither he who waters nor he who plants, but God gives the increase." After the Feast of Saint Peter, it is necessary to stop the catechisms and take them up again when the weather cools down, as they do in Orbetello. Otherwise, there is serious danger to health and life, for in the marshes the sun is very dangerous. Inform the people of this with gentle and persuasive words, citing the practice in Orbetello. They will be convinced. Add that if the workers are not well, their spiritual help comes to an end.

As for the confessionals, do not be concerned. When God wants them, they will be provided. At that time take great care and caution that they have close gratings, with doors in front for recollection and caution for the confessor, and, above all, that the gratings be very close so that in no way can the face of the one confessing be seen. Otherwise, they will run into great stumbling blocks.

I rejoice most of all over the holy observance, the peace, and the charity of the religious family, who I strongly hope in God will always be more cultivated by your zeal, vigilance, charity, and prudence, manifested in word and example.

I thank His Divine Majesty that even in temporal affairs all goes well. If they are faithful to God, they will never want for anything.

With regard to the affidavit for salt,310 I do not know how to formulate that. The provincial himself has an authentic copy of the brief of the Rule, and the provincial himself can make out the affidavit, seeing that he also has the great seal. To my way of seeing things, when the approval of the Congregation as founded in true poverty is shown, as in the principal point of the chapter on poverty, the desired end will be gained.

I am trusting on the Mercy of God for good results from Father Sebastian.311 I wish he were not so anxious, but that he would work with peace and discretion in the fatigues caused on his journeys, and that he take care of what can occur. For the rest, he is a true Israelite, as I strongly hope.

For the rest, you will make yourself always more able for your apostolic ministry in your governing task if you will be faithful in preserving true humility of heart, in the knowledge of your true nothingness, in cultivating your interior without letting yourself be overwhelmed by your occupations. In the midst of these you must, as frequently as you can, a thousand times a day, make flights of love and faith in the Spirit of God. For when the soul is lost in the depths of the divinity, nothing can touch it or harm it. Make such flights by

passing through the Door that is Christ Jesus, that is, through the Wounds of Christ, all in faith and love. In knowledge of nothingness shines forth the light and the wisdom to obtain every good.

I will celebrate the Mass very willingly, as I am able. Greet all our community for me, for I love them always more in God and cry out to heaven for all.

Let them take care to preserve cleanliness in their cells, their habits, and everything so there is no offensive odor in the cells, taking care to air them out when they go to choir at Prime, closing them in the usual way when there is sun. Getting rid of lice is necessary in order to be able to sleep; otherwise, health will disappear. Let food be sufficient as well as sleep — three full hours after Matins.

Greet the syndic and his house.312 Work to make yourself more skilled in preaching with discreet study in the cool hours. A little, but continued, effort brings one to the goal.

I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus with all the Retreat, and say I am from the heart, and give you greetings from Father John Baptist and the others.

It is sufficient if you wrote once a month as your letter of appointment indicates.313

Give the notes to the two they are consigned to.

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

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309. Father John Mary was the third General of the Congregation and the spiritual director of Paul after the death of his brother John Baptist. He was born July 16, 1727, at Brandeglio near Lucca. He entered the Congregation in 1746, took his vows on March 4, 1747, and was ordained February 26, 1752. There are thirty-eight letters preserved which Paul wrote to him. Note how Paul, in dealing with the local superior, did not hesitate to challenge him to the heights of holy standards (Carmelo A. Naselli, History of the Passionists, Vol II, pp. 101-134).

310. In the Papal States, Mendicant religious communities received a donation of salt. They were required to submit a report showing that by their constitutions they were living without a fixed income and on donations.

311. Father Sebastian Giampaoli, born in 1727, professed vows in 1747 with Father John Mary, was ordained in 1752. He was not a missionary but held the office of superior five terms and succeeded quite well. He died November 8, 1772 in the retreat at Toscanella.

312. The syndic of the Retreat in Terracina was Anthony Nardecchia, who with his wife was of great assistance to the Passionists.

313. The “patent” was an official letter from the General Superior in which he presented the rector to his community. In these years the local superiors were obliged to inform the General Superior in a monthly letter about the progress of their community.