

Yesterday, I stopped at Arby's for lunch and was surprised to find that all summer they have been running "Wednesday Deals." So, I bought a sandwich and got a free milkshake. Not bad.

So often, "deals" appear better than they really are. We've all gotten phone calls from some breathless sales person who offers us the greatest thing if only we'll give them something. I am always skeptical of "deals." And rightly so, I think.

"Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give."

This is part of Jesus' instruction to the Apostles as he is sending them out.

The message of the Gospel is free ... there is no "catch." If you receive the graces poured out in the Holy Spirit upon believers, you won't find a mysterious charge on your credit card bill. If you accept forgiveness in Christ, and when you forgive your neighbor; nobody is going to follow you around the mall trying to explain that now you need to pay \$49.95 for Forgiveness® 2.0 which is available only for a limited time.

Today, is the Memorial of Augustine Zhao Rong and Companions – 120 Chinese Martyrs.

Saint Augustine Zhao Rong was a soldier who escorted a French bishop from Chengdu, in western China; to his eventual execution in Beijing, the capital in the east. Saint Augustine Zhao Rong was so impressed by the peaceful demeanor of this bishop as he went to his death, that he not only looked into this "new" religion, but he was baptized, entered seminary, and was ordained.

Shortly after he was ordained, he was brutally tortured, and had to watch as a young companion of his, Chi Zhuzi, had his right arm cut off. Chi responded to the soldiers: "Every piece of my flesh, every drop of my blood will tell you that I am Christian.

The cost of the Gospel is in the consequences paid for believing. The world, which hungers for the graces received by believers, is also at times violent and jealous in trying to take the gifts of faith on the world's terms.

Let us pray that we may greatly treasure the "free gift" of our Faith in Jesus Christ; and when called upon to stand up for that Faith, that we may show the courage and peace of soul shown by Saint Augustine Zhao Rong and his companions.