



## **Saint Augustine Zhao Rong** *and his Companions* 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: 'As you go, proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. You received without charge, give without charge. Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with a few coppers for your purses, with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the workman deserves his keep.

'Whatever town or village you go into, ask for someone trustworthy and stay with him until you leave. As you enter his house, salute it, and if the house deserves it, let your peace descend upon it; if it does not, let your peace come back to you. And if anyone does not welcome you or listen to what you have to say, as you walk out of the house or town shake the dust from your feet. I tell you solemnly, on the day of Judgement it will not go as hard with the land of Sodom and Gomorrah as with that town.'

**Matthew 10:7-15**

All-powerful, ever-living God, turn our weakness into strength. As you gave Augustine Zhao Rong and the martyrs of China the courage to suffer death for Christ, give us the courage to live in faithful witness to you. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (from *The Roman Missal*)



Realize that the Lord is full of gifts for us. He asks just one thing: that our hearts be open. When we say 'Our Father' and we pray, we open our heart, allowing this gratuitousness to enter. Often when we need some spiritual grace, we say: 'Well, now I will fast, do penance, pray a novena...' Fine, but be careful: this is not done to 'pay' or 'buy' grace. We do it to open our hearts so that grace might enter. Grace is freely given. All God's gifts, are given without cost. And sometimes the heart folds in on itself and remains closed, and it is no longer able to receive such freely given love. We should not bargain with God.

In our spiritual life we always run the risk of slipping up on the question of payment, even when speaking with the Lord, as if we needed to bribe the Lord. No! That is not the correct path... I make a promise, in order to expand my heart to receive what is already there, waiting for us free of charge. This relationship of gratuitousness with God is what will help us to have the same rapport with others, whether it be in Christian witness, Christian service, or the pastoral work of those who guide the people of God. We do so along the way. Christian life means walking. Preach and serve, but do not make use of others. Serve and give freely that which you have received freely.

May our life of holiness be permeated by this openness of heart, so that the gratuitousness of God – the graces that He wishes to give us without cost – may enter our hearts.  
**Pope Francis**

