

Pay It Forward
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Today we celebrate the Sun Spirit Service. This service has been annually observed here in February. The significance of this special service is to learn the spirit of the sun.

As you know, the name of the country Japan is *Nippon*, which literally means “the country under the sun.” And the national flag of Japan represents the sun, which gives its light and energy equally to all beings on earth without demanding anything in return. Thus, the Japanese people have valued this spirit of the sun as their national spirit.

Our Founder Gedatsu Kongo dedicated the Sun Spirit Monument as the symbol of the Sun Spirit, in Goreichi in Japan on February 11, 1940, on the 2600th Anniversary of Japan’s Founding. The first Emperor Jinmu acceded to the throne on that day 2,675 years ago.

By establishing the Sun Spirit Monument, Gedatsu Kongo urged us to learn the spirit of the sun, which is to put forth effort and ask for nothing in return, and live with this spirit for the welfare of people and world peace. Since then, we have celebrated the anniversary of this monument on February 11 every year.

By the way, I like watching soccer games on TV. In January, Japan played against UAE in the Asian Cup in Australia. Unfortunately, Japan lost, but it was a good game. While watching the game on TV, I discovered something interesting. In soccer, in order to score, you have to shoot the ball into the opponent’s goal, not your side. This means that you have to give the ball to the other side in order to score. When you receive the ball, you have to pass, or give, the ball to someone as soon as possible. When you receive the ball, if you hold it for a long time, you cannot play a good game. A good player is a good passer, or giver. I believe the person who invented soccer must have known well the secret to live a good life.

There’s a saying: what goes around comes around. This is the law of the universe: circulation. When you receive something, you should not hold it for yourself alone, but should share it with others. This attitude makes everything circulate well in the world. This is the path for everyone’s happiness.

About 15 years ago, I saw a movie called “Pay It Forward.” It was the story of an elementary school boy. One day, his teacher gave an assignment to his class to think of how to make the world a better place, and put the idea into practice. The boy seriously thought about the assignment, and finally got a good idea. His idea was to help three people who are in need, and then ask them to help another three people, and so on and on. The boy immediately tried to put the idea into action. He sincerely tried to help a homeless man, a man who was going to commit suicide, etc. I don’t remember the story very well – I think the boy was killed tragically. Anyway, the boy’s thoughts and actions spread widely, and many people in the town followed him. Their goodwill then prevailed

in the town.

Like the movie's title, "Pay It Forward," when you get a favor from someone, you should give something back to the person as a token of appreciation. But the boy in the movie did something more than that. When he realized that he had received many blessings from many people in society, he wanted to pay it forward to someone who was in need.

Actually, we have received immeasurable blessings from many people and things until today. It is impossible to return them completely. So, it is important to pay it forward to society. This is what Gedatsu Kongo urged us to practice. We always say "appreciation and requital" in our prayer. This is it. This is the path to happiness and prosperity for all people.