



GEDATSU COMPANION

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

"Gedatsu is to work diligently in our daily duties, take care of our health and lead an ethical life."

Many of us may think that having religious faith is believing that a higher power will fulfill our prayers for something we want, such as health, longevity, wealth, or a miracle. We should realize, however, that we need nothing more than what we are currently blessed with.

While we may be facing difficulties in life right now, we must remember that we are alive and constantly receiving many blessings from family, friends, society and the universe. We are allowed to live today by the grace of the Universal Life Force and the protection of our guardian angels and ancestors.

We mustn't take these immeasurable blessings for granted. Let us appreciate today's life and make the best use of what we have been given. This attitude will lead us to true happiness.

APRIL 2022

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3	10:00 am	Virtual – "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
		11:00 am	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	10	9:30 am	In Person - Spring Grand Festival (See page 2)
			<i>Saito Goma</i> Fire Ceremony
Sun	24	9:30 am	In Person – Appreciation Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3	10:00 am	In Person – "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	10	9:30 am	Spring Grand Festival (Sacramento)
Sun	17	10:00 am	In Person – Appreciation Service
			Easter Service and Easter Egg Hunt
Thu	21	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom

MAY 2022

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	1	10:00 am	Virtual – "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
		11:00 am	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	8	9:30 am	In Person – Appreciation Service and Mother's Day Service
Sun	22	9:30 am	In Person – Appreciation Service / Old Plaque Burning Service (<i>Joan-no-gi</i>)
Tue	31		Church Closed (in lieu of Memorial Day)

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	8	10:00 am	In Person – "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	15	10:00 am	In Person – Appreciation Service and Mother's Day Service
Thu	19	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Tue	31		Church Closed (in lieu of Memorial Day)



April “Never Forgotten” Memorial Services

“Never Forgotten” Memorial Services are held monthly at the Gedatsu Church to honor the memory of those who have passed away during that particular month.

Sacramento Spiritual Center

“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service **via YouTube video**
Sunday, April 3, at 10 a.m. Honoring the souls of:

Natsuko Nakatani, Masashi Russell Ota, Arthur Sakamoto, Susumu Suyeyasu, Chiyoko Suzuki, Thomas Taro Takashashi, Keichi Tekemura, Katherine Kazue Tanaka, Henry Toshio Tateishi, Keiji Tsuboi, Sally Yukiko Tsuboi, and Tsutomu Ben Tsuboi.

Los Angeles Church

“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service **in person**
Sunday, April 3, at 10 a.m., honoring the souls of:

Matsuichi Azama, Maria Lechuga Covos, Sameko Hamaoka, Ted Tadashi Hayashi, Sadao Hirano, Kazuye Ito, Will Karger, Fumiko Kawamura, Karen Mineko Kawamura, William Masami Kawamura, Yoshimi Richard Kikuchi, Masaichi Richard Kikuta, Thomas Mahoney, Matsuko Yamashita Miyasako, Clifton Mizokami, Kinryo Mizuki, Seiichiro Mizutani, Yoshinobu Nakamura, Osamu Naruko, Harry Odama, Otomatsu Odama, Tomoyo Ogura, Akiko Okazaki, Emiko Okimura, Helen Shiroishi, Hidemi Pat Shiroishi, Dayna Slotnik, Tsutako Sherrie Takimoto, Bobby Kiyoshi Tanji, Shigeno Tomita, Henry Tsujimura, Alice Tsukamaki, Joseph Harold Wessman, Jr., Dr. Tsuyoshi Yamashita, and Enes S. Sarvello Zeto.

Memorial Tower Enshrinements – Fall 2022

After a two-year postponement because of the pandemic and restricted Festival attendance, enshrinements in the Gedatsu Memorial Tower are now scheduled for the Fall Grand Festival in September. Applications for enshrinement will be accepted until June 15. The fee is \$300 per application. Application forms are available at your church office.



Spring Grand Festival

Sunday, April 10, 9:30 a.m.

Gedatsu Spiritual Center, Sacramento

Program I – *Gochi* Sanctuary Service

Program II – *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony

- Members and guests are invited to attend.
- Health protocols will be observed.
- Sermon via video by guest speaker **Reverend Yasunori Miyasaka** from *Gedatsu-kai*, Japan.
- Due to limited internet connectivity, the *Saito Goma* ceremony will be videorecorded but not livestreamed.
- A free box lunch will be served.

Minister Schedules

Minister-in-training, Mica Rodriguez, will attend a three-week training and study session with **Reverend Kazuo Yamada** at the Gedatsu Church of Hawaii in Honolulu. She will leave the Sacramento Spiritual Center on April 11 and return the first week in May. **Senior Reverend Akira Sebe** will conduct services during her absence.

Reverend Naoya Okano and his family will vacation in Japan this summer. His wife, **Yuko**, and their two children will leave the U.S. on June 18, followed by Rev. Naoya on July 5. They will return to the U.S. together on August 5. Guest ministers (to be announced) will serve the L.A. Church during Rev. Naoya's absence.

Roku Jizo Food Bazaar Canceled

The Sacramento Spiritual Center announces that its annual celebration and fundraiser, normally held in late June, has been canceled for the third consecutive year. Because visitor attendance is uncertain, planning and preparing for the event are difficult. Watch for our Bazaar in 2023.



Selected Quotes of Master Gedatsu Kongo - #11

Selected and translated by **Reverend Hisakazu Taki** from
“The Teachings of Master Gedatsu Kongo”

- ☸ Delusion and enlightenment are the creations of our mind. Everything is the expression of human thought. Like a conjuring magician, we can steer ourselves in any direction solely by our mind.
- ☸ Abandon ourselves to the will of the universe. This is the essence of religious faith.
- ☸ Jealousy and arrogance illustrate the worst aspects of humans. Who wishes to possess such loathsome traits?
- ☸ “This is mine. This is my wealth.” Such wrongful thinking becomes the source of misery. Our physical body is not our possession. Can we really own wealth? Such selfish thoughts are like a beast fighting for a piece of meat.
- ☸ It is easy to find fault in others but very difficult to see our own faults. Those who constantly criticize others’ faults cannot correct their own. This is why many religions regard repentance as an important condition of religious faith.
- ☸ Don’t put off until tomorrow what should be done today. When we make up our mind to do something, move immediately into action.
- ☸ The most precious treasure we possess is to be content with what we have.
- ☸ When we become aware that we are constantly receiving immeasurable Divine blessings, we can accept any hardship as Divine grace.
- ☸ Religion should move with the times and lead the world.
- ☸ Open our mind’s eye. We can clearly see the truth only through selfless introspection.
- ☸ The essence of Gedatsu is appreciation and gratitude.
- ☸ Fixation is an obstacle to improvement. Any doctrine or creed is useless if it is behind the times. Time is always moving forward. Religion should meet the needs of the times to create a new world. I believe that religion should be a rising sun that pioneers a new era.
- ☸ Why do religions need to compete and fight each other? If religious teachings represent the universal truth, there should be no borders between them.
- ☸ Respect all religions. For sincere spiritual seekers, every phenomenon in the world is a living teaching. This is the Gedatsu way of life.



Gedatsu Q&A - Part 22

By Reverend Hisakazu Taki

Q *How can the Gedatsu teaching be summarized in the simplest terms?*

A Among the philosophical statements made by **Master Gedatsu Kongo** is “to practice humility, poverty, and death.” I believe this simple statement summarizes the Gedatsu teaching.

Practice Humility

Some years ago, the late inventor and entrepreneur, Steve Jobs, told students at Stanford University, “Stay hungry! Stay foolish!”

By these words, I believe he was saying that we should always have our minds open to the unknown, ready to learn something that we don’t know – because what we do know is just a drop of water in the vast ocean of knowledge.

As humans, we possess a sense of pride, which to a certain extent, promotes self-improvement. But by putting too much faith in our knowledge and abilities, we may become arrogant and feel as if we know everything. In actuality, our views may be limited and biased. An awareness of our self-pride promotes an attitude of humility, which allows us to grow spiritually. This is why Master Gedatsu Kongo taught us to self-reflect and practice humility.

Practice Poverty

To practice poverty means to realize the inherent and genuine value of things. When we reflect on our daily existence, we become aware of the immeasurable blessings we receive from everything in the universe and from society. We realize that we are provided with many things, such as food, clothing, and shelter, which are material products of society’s efforts in our daily life. We freely receive sunlight, air and water, which are provided through Nature’s bounty.

Unfortunately, we usually take these blessings for granted and go through life with a constant feeling of discontent. The realization and appreciation for the value of all things constitute the meaning of practicing poverty, per Master Gedatsu Kongo. Awareness of this fact leads to our true happiness.

Practice Death

To practice or experience death means to lead a selfless life. When we realize that everything in life is on borrowed terms, we see things with an unselfish attitude and are able to live without conflict.

Normally, we may feel as if we could live forever, and develop feelings of discontent or create discord with others. With the perspective of life as being brief and fleeting, we learn to be thankful for being allowed to live every minute of every day. Hence, life is then viewed as the most precious gift from the Universal Life Force and our ancestors. We should live fully each day with this awareness and appreciation.

Gedatsu is to practice humility, poverty and death. In brief, live life fully each day with appreciation and gratitude. This is the path to everyone’s happiness. I believe this summarizes the Gedatsu teaching.

Q *I am just an ordinary person with nothing special to offer the world. How can I live a meaningful life?*

A To answer this question, please read the following story entitled, “The Pot.”

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on opposite ends of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master’s house. The other pot, however, had a crack in it and arrived at the master’s house only half full.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

For a full two years this went on daily, with the water bearer delivering only one and a half pots of water to his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, flawless to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

One day, after two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, the cracked pot spoke to the water bearer by the stream.

"I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaw, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old, cracked pot, and in his compassion, he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old, cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wildflowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again the pot apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walked back from the stream, you've watered them.

"For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

When I read this story, I was encouraged by its life-affirming message. Each of us has some flaw. We're all "cracked pots." But we should be aware that's our uniqueness. In the great universal economy, nothing goes to waste. Don't be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them, and you, too, can be the cause of beauty. Know that in our weakness we find our strength.

It is, of course, important to self-reflect and correct our attitude for our improvement. However, we should remember that even our defects are precious gifts from the universe. Everyone's existence is unique and irreplaceable. When you become aware of this and try your best in your role, you will be able to live a full and meaningful life.



***“Interbeing” – by Thich Nhat Hanh
from “The Heart of Understanding”***



If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper *inter-are*. “Interbeing” is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix “Inter-” with the verb “to be,” we have a new verb, “inter-be”. Without a cloud, we cannot have paper, so we can say that the cloud and the sheet of paper *inter-are*.

If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow. Even we cannot grow without sunshine. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper. The paper and sunshine *inter-are*. And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see the wheat. We know that the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper. And the logger’s father and the mother are in it, too. When we look in this way, we see that without all of those things, this sheet of paper cannot exist.

Looking even more deeply, we see we are in it too. This is not difficult to see, because when we look at the sheet of paper, the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. You cannot point out one thing that is not here – time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper. That is why I think the word “inter-be” should be in the dictionary. “To be” is to inter-be. You cannot just *be* by yourself alone. You have to inter-be with every other thing. This sheet of paper is, because everything else is.

Suppose we try to return one of the elements to its source. Suppose we return the sunshine to the sun. Do you think that this sheet of paper will be possible? No, without sunshine nothing can be. And if we return the logger to his mother, then we have no sheet of paper either. The fact is that this sheet of paper is made up only of “non-paper elements.” And if we return these non-paper elements to their sources, then there can be no paper at all. Without “non-paper elements,” like mind, logger, sunshine and so on, there will be no paper. As thin as this sheet of paper is, it contains everything in the universe in it.”

*“You cannot just be
by yourself alone.
You have to ‘inter-be’
with every other
thing.”*

*These words, and the commentary at left, were written by the Vietnamese Zen monk, **Thich Nhat Hanh**, in his book, “The Heart of Understanding,” which describes the essence of the Heart Sutra.*

On January 22, Thich Nhat Hanh died at the age of 95. During his lifetime, he was a global peace activist, renowned teacher, prolific author and an advocate for applying eternal Buddhist principles to contemporary social issues.

His commentary explains the concept of “interbeing,” in which everyone and everything in the universe is inter-related and cannot exist without the others. The awareness and understanding of the interdependence of all things is the core message of the Heart Sutra, or Hannya Shingyo.





How to Help Ukrainians

As the armed conflict in Ukraine continues, millions of people in Ukraine and millions of refugees fleeing the country need relief and protection during this humanitarian crisis. Here are some organizations that are asking for assistance.

UNICEF works with people in Ukraine and child-protection mobile teams to help children with psychological care, mental health support and protection services.

Doctors Without Borders has emergency response activities in neighboring countries and works with local volunteers, organizations and health care workers to treat the wounded and provide telemedicine training for trauma care.

Voices of Children provides emergency psychological assistance to affected Ukrainian children.

Sunflower of Peace prepares first aid and tactical backpacks for paramedics and doctors on the front lines.

Save the Children, based in London, helps to deliver lifesaving aid to vulnerable children in Ukraine.

UN Refugee Agency provides emergency assistance to families in Ukraine, such as cash assistance and opportunities for resettlement.

CARE raises money for its Ukraine Crisis Fund, which provides immediate aid, including food, water, hygiene kits, support services and direct cash assistance.

Note: To avoid charity scams, look up donation organizations on charity watchdog sites like Charity Navigator, GuideStar, Give Well and Charity Watch.

Northern California Total: \$3,586

General Donations: R. Nakatani, A. Sebe (\$1,000), M/M D. Tsuboi, K. Gibson, M. Rodriguez, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, S. Tanaka, R. Ide, J. Tanaka, M/M J. Horner, M/M D. Ide, M/M P. Reid, S. Taketa, M/M S. Sekikawa, P. Harada

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M/M J. Horner	Special prayer service for surgery
M. Fukushima	Appreciation for memorial service
M/M K. Nagao	Appreciation for weekly prayer group for mom
Wood/Nagatsuka	Appreciation for weekly prayer group for mom

Southern California Total: \$2,860

General: M/M M. Ishida, M/M K. Kuritani, I. Long, J. Mah, M/M V. Mizokami, M. Nakamura, M. Okada, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, M/M S. Shiroishi, F. Sueyoshi, M/M H. Tsujimura, S. Tanaka

Special Acknowledgments

Do. Shiroishi	In memory of Kiyo Ishida
T. Ishida	Ancestor blessing
T. Ishida	In memory of Tadayoshi Ishida
T. Ishida	In memory of Kiyo Ishida
K. Ishida	In memory of Kiyo Ishida
J. Kaku	In memory of Morio Kaku
J. Shiroishi	In memory of Sayoko Shiroishi
M/M R. Allum	Appreciation for parking
M/M M. Ishida	"Never Forgotten" for Yvonne Ishida

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General: S. Matsumoto, S. Shiroishi, M/M P. Reid, H. Tsujimura, P. Akashi

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Note: Special Acknowledgments are listed for gifts \$100+. Dollar amounts are shown for gifts \$500+.

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The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Sasha Shimazu**, who grew up in the rural town of Jackson, California, and attended the Sacramento Spiritual Center with her mother, **Yoneko Shimazu**. Sasha fondly remembers working the snow cone and *udon* tables at the summertime *Rokuji* Bazaar.

“The Sacramento branch,” says Sasha, “was an important place for me to engage with the Japanese community.” Sasha lives in McLean, Virginia, and is connected with Gedatsu from afar by joining virtual programs through YouTube livestream and other online communications.

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Mica Rodriguez, minister-in-training, adviser

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Dried or Fresh Offerings . . . Our Appreciation Is What Counts

When members attend the Spring Festival in April, they may be surprised to see that the colorful offerings of fresh fruit and produce that are usually offered at the *Goreichi* shrines have been replaced by packages of dried vegetables and fruits. The switch to non-perishable food items began when the Grand Festivals resumed on a limited basis last spring and fall, after being canceled in 2020 because of the pandemic.

Reduced attendance at the Festivals means fewer people to prepare the offerings – dozens of **Tsujimura** family members generously volunteered in preparing the offerings for decades – and potential waste of the produce after the Festival. Non-perishable food items enable the offerings to be prepared well in advance of the event by fewer people.

“Whether we offer fresh fruits and vegetables or packaged goods and cans, the value and meaning are the same,” says **Rev. Naoya Okano**. “Our offerings in any form express our heartfelt appreciation to the gods for their blessings on our Festival day.”

Dozens of *sanbo* (elevated wooden trays) display offerings at the various shrines on the *Goreichi* grounds. At left, top photo, an assortment of non-perishable foods; at bottom, fresh fruits and produce.

