

GEDATSU COMPANION

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"To grow a great and majestic tree,
one must apply equally great and
thoughtful effort."*

Master Gedatsu Kongo, who emphasized the importance of education, especially advocated what he called "practical education" and "living education." He said that these concepts can ultimately be summed up in a single word: "Gedatsu."

The true meaning of this month's teaching is that, particularly in education, we should not rely on methods based on a narrow view. Rather, we must approach education from a broader and higher perspective – that is, without becoming preoccupied with small details, but instead viewing matters as a whole in line with a life of appreciation and gratitude.

MAY 2025

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	10		No Service
Tue	12	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	24	10:00 am	Appreciation and Mother's Day Service / Old Plaque Burning Service (<i>Joen-no-gi</i>)

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3	10:00 am	<i>Hiho</i> Meditation Practice
Sun	10	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	17	10:00 am	Appreciation and Mother's Day Service
Thu	21	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	24	10:00 am	<i>Shakyo</i> – Writing <i>Hannya Shingyo</i>

JUNE 2025

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	7	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	9	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	14		No Service
Sun	28	10:00 am	Appreciation and Father's Day Service / Mother Kiyota Memorial Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	7	10:00 am	<i>Hiho</i> Meditation Practice
Sun	14	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Thu	18	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	21	10:00 am	Appreciation and Father's Day Service
Sun	28	10:00 am	<i>"Kokedama"</i> – the Japanese Art of Moss Ball



May “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.

People of all faiths are welcome, so invite your friends and family members to attend. Even if you are unable to attend, you may still honor the soul of a loved one.

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, May 3, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Hyozaburo Hirose, Ben Tsutomu Ide, Buster Yoshiharu Ide, Grayce Matsumoto, Raymond Kaname Nakamoto, Akino Ogawa, Betty Ozaki, Larizlado Rodriguez, Ramona Rodriguez, Isami Suzuki, Kenneth Taketa, Masao Taketa, and Shigeno Tateishi.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, May 10, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Satsuki Akiyoshi, Keiji Ariyasu, Marilyn S. Ariyasu, Gorokichi Aso, Tsugu Endo, Andrué Gutierrez, Wesley Hiramí, John Kuritani, Chih-ming Lai, Sumako Matsumoto, Tamotsu Matsuura, Kikuye Miyamura, Nobuichi Miyashita, June Junko Morioka, Tameharu Nagao, Hitomi Nakaguchi, Ronald Yoshio Nakamura, Shigemi Nakamura, Shizuyo Nakamura, Sumiko Nakamura, Teruko Nakamura, Seiko Notoya, Mitsuji Okada, Joyce Okimura, Miyoko Okimura, Adeline Sanchez, Rev. Jerry Shiroishi, Hiroko Takahashi, Joe Mitsuhide Takara, Kiyo Tanji, Yoza Tsujimura, Jane Harue Wakasa, Hiroshi Yamamisaka.**



Prices Increase for Amacha Products

Due to increased import costs for *Amacha* products from Japan, the prices of these products have risen.

- Amacha* (leaf tea) \$35 (formerly \$30)
- Amacha* (teabags) \$32 (formerly \$29)
- Amacha* Extract \$35 (formerly \$25)
- Amacha* Soap \$8 (formerly \$5)
- Amacha* Candy \$3 (formerly \$2.50)

Old Plaque-burning Service

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its annual *Joen-no-gi* Old Plaque-burning Service on Sunday, May 24. Old holy tea plaques and holy paper plaques that were returned to the church will be lit on fire to return the sacred items to their natural elements and the universe.

Tower Enshrinements – Fall 2026

Enshrinements in the Gedatsu Memorial Tower are scheduled for the **Fall Grand Festival on September 6.** The price for enshrinement plaques is \$500. Applications for enshrinement will be accepted until June 15. Application forms are available at your church office.

Japanese Cooking Class: “Fun and Oishii”



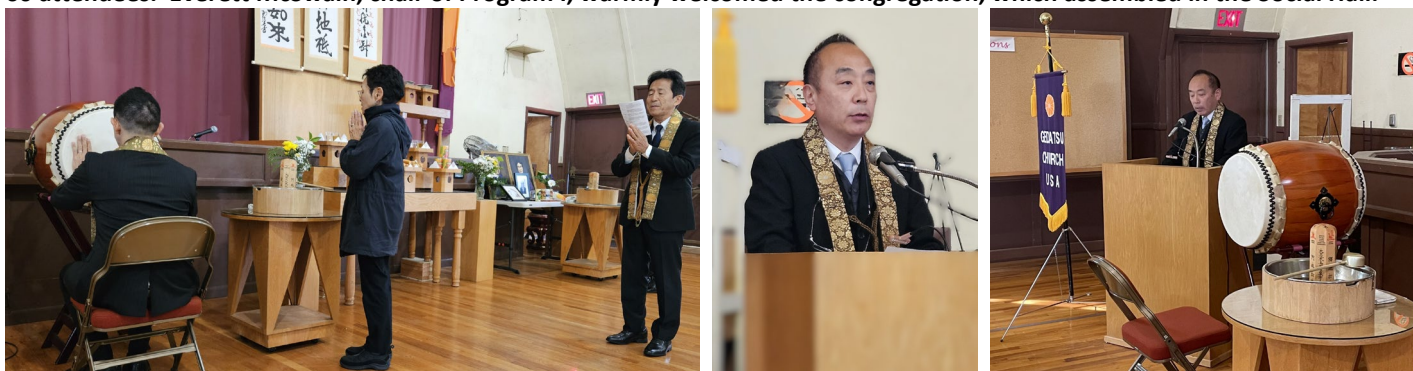
Recently at the L.A. Church, participants in the Japanese Cooking Class enjoyed a hands-on lesson in making a variety of flavorful dishes, including Japanese egg salad, egg salad pasta, white balsamic pickled vegetables, and soy balsamic pasta salad. The class was led by professional Chef Hiroyuki Fujita, husband of member Janet Hirayama. Chef Hiro’s passion for cooking began at an early age, when he helped his mother in her neighborhood restaurant. He later honed his skills, working as a chef in Tokyo, Australia and Seattle.

Photos, at top from left: Chef Hiro shows Nanami Okano how to prepare a dish; Jo Ann Kaku and Diana Mukai perfect their salad-mixing skills. At bottom, participants eagerly follow the recipe instructions.

SPRING GRAND FESTIVAL – SUNDAY, APRIL 12, SACRAMENTO



Despite the chilly temperature and rainy skies, the 153rd Spring Grand Festival lifted the hearts and spirits of the approximately 60 attendees. Everett McSwain, chair of Program I, warmly welcomed the congregation, which assembled in the Social Hall.



Reverend Kojima and Reverend Okano led the congregation in prayers, with *amacha* tea blessing given by Ikuko Kuritani. Reverend Hiroyuki Nakamura, director of religious affairs, *Gedatsu-kai* Japan, delivered the keynote address (see page 4).



The skies cleared as the *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony was performed on the *Goreichi* sacred grounds, under program chair, Pauline Tomita. Reverend Nakamura delivered the invocation and Senior Reverend Akira Sebe officiated the service, a role he has performed for more than 40 years.



As it chanted the sutras and prayers, the congregation offered plaques bearing their earnest wishes to the sacred fire, thanking *Fudo-myō* for its guidance and protection. They gave prayers of appreciation for the blessings of the Universal Life Force and for the guidance and protection received from all spirits.

Gedatsu ministers gathered for a group photo. From left, Reverend Takao Kojima, Senior Reverend Akira Sebe, Reverend Hiroyuki Nakamura, Reverend Naoya Okano, and Sacramento member Courtney Ide.

“Opening the Way”

Keynote Address by **Reverend Hiroyuki Nakamura**
Director of Religious Affairs, *Gedatsu-kai* Japan

Hello, everyone. My name is Hiroyuki Nakamura, and I have come from the Gedatsu Church in Japan. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the opportunity to join you at this Spring Grand Festival.

On this special occasion, I would like to share a few thoughts on the theme, “Opening the Way.”

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. I would like to offer my sincere congratulations on this important milestone.

I believe that the 250-year history of the United States has truly been a history of “opening the way.”

One person who comes to mind as a symbol of this spirit is Jackie Robinson. In 1947, he broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball and became the first African American player to step onto the field. That single step brought about great change throughout American society.

Today, even players like Shohei Ohtani have been able to open a new path -- as a two-way player -- because Jackie Robinson first opened the way for others.

Now, let us turn to another example of “opening the way.” What kind of path did Master Gedatsu Kongo open for us?

I firmly believe that he opened a precious path—a path that allows people to connect with God and their ancestors, and to live according to the true way of life meant for human beings.

If we do not live according to the way taught by Gedatsu Kongo, we will walk a different path—one that will not inspire others.

Then, how can we walk this path correctly?

Gedatsu Kongo taught that the first step is to recognize – and appreciate -- the continuous chain of life that leads to our own lives.

He also taught that we must understand the inclinations inherited within that chain of life.

In old Japan, my ancestors were samurai for many generations, and because of this, I carry what might be called samurai inclinations. The good qualities of the samurai include bringing people together and leading others to create a better society. However, the

negative side is the tendency to command and control others. When things do not go as expected, I tend to react with anger. I recognize such inclinations within myself.

Gedatsu Kongo also taught that human beings are given missions by God. One mission is to improve our own inclinations and walk the path toward the development of our character. The other mission is to strive for coexistence and mutual prosperity, and ultimately for world peace.

As I walk the path of character development, I realize that if I do not correct my negative samurai inclinations, I cannot build harmonious relationships with others or fulfill the second mission of coexistence, mutual prosperity, and world peace.

Each of us has our own mission—a path that we must forge for ourselves. Though this path may seem daunting, if people come to understand this path and follow it, it will lead to coexistence, mutual prosperity, and world peace.

Because we are among those blessed to be connected with the teachings of Gedatsu and guided along this path, there is only one thing that we must do: to forge the path given to each of us, and to continue walking it.

When I was younger, I never imagined that Japanese players would one day play in Major League Baseball, especially someone like Shohei Ohtani. Yet he has opened an unprecedented path as a two-way player, astonishing even other Major League players, and continues to strive for greater achievement.

The path toward world peace may seem long, and even impossible in today’s world. But just as an extraordinary player like Shohei Ohtani appeared in the world of baseball, something equally extraordinary could happen to make world peace a reality.

What we can say with certainty, however, is this: We must believe in the teachings of Gedatsu, recognize the path we must forge, and continue to walk it with steadiness and sincerity. And this begins with offering gratitude to all the lives connected to us, and recognizing and improving the inclinations within that chain of life. There is nothing else that we can do.

I believe that world peace will surely be realized. Until that day comes, let us walk together on the path opened by Master Gedatsu Kongo.



New Member Forum: An Unexpected Learning Experience for Everyone

When **Deacon Jo Ann Shiroisohi** first conceived of the New Member Forum, her goal was to create an informal, no-pressure setting where new members of the L.A. Church could learn the basics of the Gedatsu teaching. What she did not anticipate was that the sessions would become a surprising learning experience not only for new members, but also for the course organizers – including fellow member **Cookie Barthel**, **Reverend Naoya Okano**, and **Reverend Takao Kojima**.

“We were shocked to discover that even though new members regularly attended our monthly services, many were unfamiliar with even the most basic aspects of our practice – things we had assumed were widely understood,” Jo Ann shared. “Questions like: What is the Spring Festival? Why do we pour tea? What is the purpose of the items on the altar?”

No Question Too Simple, Focus on ABCs of the Teaching

These questions revealed an important truth: while new members were present and participating, many lacked a deeper understanding of the meaning behind the practices. In response, the forum quickly evolved into a space where no question was too simple and where foundational teachings could be explained with clarity and intention. Just as importantly, it prompted organizers to reflect on how effectively the church communicates its teachings – and to reconsider long-held assumptions about what newcomers already know.

As a result, early sessions now focus on the “ABCs” of the teaching, lean heavily on open Q&As, and include simple demonstrations of basic practices.

“We go slowly, taking cues from participants as to how much they are absorbing in any one session,” said Jo Ann. “This is just as much a learning experience for us, the instructors, as it is for the students. It’s truly a two-way exchange.”

The impact of this thoughtful approach can be seen in the heartfelt responses from participants.

Says one new member: *“The biggest thing that strikes me about the L.A. Gedatsu Church is the positive energy that exudes from it. The sky seems brighter once you drive onto the property, and the energy feels pure and clean. I have visited many beautiful temples, shrines, and churches over the years where I didn’t feel that same energy. For me, this is proof that the Gedatsu Church is doing things right.”*

Another participant shared: *“It was a very enjoyable meeting. I even purchased my own portable altar, and I’m looking forward to practicing Gedatsu in my daily life!”*

Testimonials like these affirm for Jo Ann and the organizing team that they are on the right path. More than simply an introductory class, the New Member Forum has become a meaningful bridge – connecting curiosity with understanding, and participation with purpose.



The April session of the “Introduction to Gedatsu” New Member Forum began with a fun, interactive icebreaker, followed by Reverend Kojima’s explanation of the components of the Sanctuary altar.

Reverend Okano then introduced the *Hiho* and *Ajikan* meditation practices, giving participants the hands-on opportunity to experience these important practices firsthand (shown below).



Hiho Meditation



Ajikan Meditation

Q&A opportunities were woven throughout the session.

Following the program, participants gathered for a shared lunch of *chirashi*, chicken wings, and *sunomono*.

The lunches provide additional time to connect, reflect, and strengthen their bonds as a growing learning community.

Gedatsu Study Series – Part 2

“The Practice of Humility, Poverty, and Death”

Translated and reprinted from
The Gedatsu Magazine – Japan 2022

In our journey of learning these teachings, "**spiritual peace**," "**perfection of one's character**," and "**absolute gratitude**" are the ultimate goals we strive to reach. The "Practice of Humility, Poverty, and Death" serves as the most effective essence of the teachings to guide us toward those goals.

The first recorded mention of the "Practice of Humility, Poverty, and Death" appeared in the November 1940 issue of *Gedatsu* magazine. It listed:

1. The practice of becoming humble.
2. The practice of living in poverty.
3. The practice of death.

It further noted: *"If one completely practices these three, not only will all ailments be dissolved, but one will also become a person of integrity and dignity. I want to emphasize it. Please keep it firmly in your heart."*

The Essence of the Teachings

In the second volume of *Memories of Gedatsu Kongo*, there is an account by Asano Kobayashi of the Hyogo Shimomikata Branch. She recalls Gedatsu Kongo's visit around August 1941, during which he said, *"Gedatsu is to practice humility, poverty, and death."*

He then turned to his companion, Mr. Shoji Kobayashi, and said, *"I thought of these words — practice of humility, poverty, and death — on the way here today. I have never spoken them to anyone before. This is the first time I am mentioning them. Isn't that right, Mr. Kobayashi?"*

Mr. Kobayashi confirmed that it was indeed the first time he had heard them. Asano noted that Gedatsu Kongo explained these three practices with such care and patience that everyone was deeply moved and convinced by the profound lesson.

Thus, it is certain that Gedatsu Kongo began emphasizing this teaching around 1940.

This was a milestone era for Gedatsu-kai: Three Sacred Monuments (Sanken-pi) were established, the Pilgrimage to the Three Sacred Places—one of our most fundamental events—began, and the Tokyo Dojo was built. Furthermore, in 1942, "Shinko," Sincere Practice, was published. While Gedatsu Kongo personally dedicated his energy to the education of leaders, postwar relief and vocational training efforts became increasingly active.

In other words, this was the critical moment when the entire foundation of the Gedatsu teachings was solidified and when Gedatsu-kai started focusing on benefiting society. The fact that the 'Practice of Humility, Poverty, and Death' was introduced during such a significant time—and remained his emphasis until his death—clearly demonstrates that these practices are the very essence of Gedatsu teachings.

Spiritual Peace and Character Perfection

The word **keiko (practice)** refers to the repetitive study of arts, martial arts, or techniques to master them. Similarly, **shugyo** refers to acquiring knowledge or skills through training. Both imply "repetition" and "accumulation." In other words, the "Practice of Humility, Poverty, and Death" is something we learn through constant repetition in our daily lives.

In the first mention of this teaching, it was said that practicing these three would "dissolve all ailments and lead to becoming a person of integrity and dignity."

Gedatsu Kongo taught: *"Illness is not merely cured; it is fundamentally eradicated."*

"True faith must manifest as working harder than others, taking better care of one's health, and living a life righteously and purely. Because one lives as a true human being of integrity and dignity, it follows naturally that they will succeed and be healed."

(Continued on back page)

MARCH 2026 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$1,945

General Donations: A. Sebe, J. Detwiler / J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, M. Fukushima, No Name, R. Ide

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M/M D. Ide	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service appreciation in memory of John Chin, Sue Chin, John Hatae, Toyota Kino, Rin Ide
M/M P. Tateishi	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service appreciation in memory of Fred Tanaka
J. Tanaka	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service in memory of Fred Shigeru Tanaka
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service
M. Fukushima	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service in memory of Muneo John Hatae
J. Tanaka	Appreciation and gratitude for <i>Ohigan</i> Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude for <i>Ohigan</i> and Appreciation Service
M/M C. Tanaka	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service in memory of Fred Shigeru Tanaka and Muneo John Hatae
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude, monthly donation

Southern California Total: \$5,425

General: M/M R. Allum, H. Asaka, M/M N. Chodor, A. DeWitt, K. Fujii (\$1,000), M/M M. Hamada, J. Hamamoto, M/M T. Hirami, T. Ishida, J. Kaku, M/M T. Kojima, K. Kuritani, M/M K. Kuritani, I. Long, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M B. Mizokami, M/M V. Mizokami, M/M C. Morioka, M/M S. Mukai, T. Murakami, M. Nakamura, No Name, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, M/M A., Shiroishi, De. Shiroishi, Do. Shiroishi, J. Shiroishi, M. Takahashi, N. Takara, A. Tsujimura, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M G. Wood

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M/M Ho. Tsujimura	Special offering for Lily Kuritani and Tokutaro Tsujimura
M/M M. Hamada	In memory of Eleamar Minae Hamada
M/M N. Chodor	“Never Forgotten” Service for Terry Shiroishi
De. Shiroishi	“Never Forgotten” Service for Terry Shiroishi
Do. Shiroishi	“Never Forgotten” Service for Terry Shiroishi
S. Shiroishi	“Never Forgotten” Service for Terry Shiroishi
M/M Ken Kuritani	Special offering for Lily Kuritani and Tokutaro Tsujimura
J. Reid	Appreciation for old <i>kuyo</i> plaques
M/M G. Wood	Appreciation for new car
M/M S. Mukai	“Never Forgotten” Service for Shigeru Fred Tanaka
K. Mizokami	One-year memorial service for Michael Mizokami
Mizokami Family	One-year memorial service for Michael Mizokami

Online Donations: Total: \$402

General: G. Iwata, D. Allum, S. Shiroishi, W. Young, H. Tsujimura J. Reid, G. Hass

*Note: Special Acknowledgments are listed for gifts \$100+.
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Teaching of "Humility" – Continued from page 6)

We see that "dissolving all ailments" is a blessing received by living a life righteously and purely, which is attained through the practice of humility, poverty, and death.

Furthermore, in the "Five Laws," Gedatsu Kongo originally wrote that "all human sufferings shall be eradicated." He later revised this to: **"When one lives with gratitude, one can attain true peace of mind and spiritual enlightenment."** Therefore, by devoting ourselves to the 'Practice of Humility, Poverty, and Death,' we can attain true peace of mind and spiritual enlightenment, which is the ultimate goal of religion. Those who live in this state are "People of Integrity and Dignity."

Absolute Gratitude

From the words *"When one lives with gratitude, one can attain true peace of mind and spiritual enlightenment,"* we understand that to be devoted to the "Practice of Humility, Poverty, and Death" is to spend every day with appreciation and gratitude.

Gedatsu Kongo truly embodied such a way of life. He once taught a member: *"Living in a house with a roof that doesn't leak, having clothes to wear for the seasons, and having three warm meals every day—this is the life of supreme gratitude."*



When the member replied, *"But isn't that just common sense?"*

Gedatsu Kongo replied: **"The heart that finds the 'ordinary' to be a 'blessing'—that is a life of appreciation."**

Even in his final years, when doctors forbade visitors, he never refused a member who came for personal guidance. He lived in a state of **absolute gratitude**, saying: *"I am satisfied, delighted, and cheerful every day. I feel pleasure and a deep sense of unworthiness for such blessings. If you reach Gedatsu (enlightenment), you can feel the same as I do."*

This was the state of mind he reached through the "Practice of Humility, Poverty, and Death." Let us strive to reach such a state by accumulating these practices ourselves.

