June 2026
Vol. 77 No. 6

GEDATSU COMPANION

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2 News and Announcements
3 Around Our Church: L.A. Church Easter Program and Baking Class
4 *"The Practice of Humility, Poverty and Death"* – Part 3
6 *"We Can Experience Resurrection in our Lives"* – Sermon by Reverend Naoya Okano
7 April Offerings

Gedatsu Kongo's
Thought for the Month

"Duty must be fulfilled first and foremost. Duty takes precedence. It must be 'duty first.'"

"Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country."

These iconic words by President John F. Kennedy capture a timeless truth. Yet in modern times, we often see people who are quick to demand their rights yet slow to fulfill their responsibilities. We must remember that true rights and rewards are not entitled; they are the earned results of our consistent, everyday actions.

The Gedatsu teaching is the same. While studying doctrine is essential, it is only the beginning. Our true duty is to offer prayers and blessings with our whole heart and soul. It is to reflect deeply on ourselves, improve our own lifestyle, and ultimately bring happiness to those around us.

This is the duty we should practice as Gedatsu students.

JUNE 2026

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	*Hiho* 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	*"Kokedama"* – the Japanese Art of Moss Ball

CHURCHWIDE

Thu	11	5:00 pm	Board of Directors Meeting via Zoom

JULY 2026

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	5	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	12		No Service
Tue	14	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	26	10:00 am	Appreciation / *Obon* Service / Graduates Honored

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	5	10:00 am	*Hiho* Meditation Practice
Sun	12	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	19	10:00 am	Appreciation / *Obon* Service / Graduates Honored
Thu	23	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	26	10:00 am	*Chile Relleno* Cooking Class

June "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, June 7, at 10 a.m.,** honoring the souls of **Mine Kino Hirose, Mark Alan Mullins, Motokichi Ide, Kinuyo Nakatani, Suyeko Hada Takemura, Mihoko Tanaka, Sadae Tanaka, Steven Tateishi, Jane Keiko Thorne, Isamu Yamada, Bettie Yamamura, and Masaru Yamamura.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service on **Sunday, June 14, at 10 a.m.,** honoring the souls of **Harry Hidejin Arakawa, Kimiko Hirano, Mitsuko Kaku, Masa Kikuta, Tsuchinojo Kimura, Edward Yutaka Kuritani, Kazumi Matsunami, Kameyoshi Michiuye, Manabu Mukai, Fusako Murakami, Phillip Nakamura, Robert Nakamura, Mary Anne Nolan, Ken Numata, Ai Okada, Hideyo Okada, Masakichi Okada, Yoshiko Mary Otera, Lawrence Sasano, Roy S. Shiba, Hidekichi Shiroishi, Tsuna Shiroishi, Yoshimasa Taninaka, Steven Tateishi, Hironobu George Terakawa, Ben Seiroku Toguchi, Carolyn Wong, June Tsuyoko Yamamisaka, and Russell Yamamisaka.**

Fees for Hard-copy *Companion* Newsletter

Companion readers are encouraged to receive the newsletter for free via email. Fees are charged for hard copies: $25/year for postal-mailed copies; $10/year for copies picked up at the church; $1 for single copies.

To receive the newsletter via email or postal mail, or to pay or renew the annual fee, contact **Rev. Naoya Okano** at the L.A. Church at (626) 233-2359 or naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com.

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.

L.A. Women's Club Presents: "Discover *Kokedama,* the Japanese Art of Moss Ball"

- Join us at the Los Angeles Gedatsu Church on **Sunday, June 28, at 10 a.m.**
- Learn how to transform a live plant in a moss ball medium into a unique sculptural art form.
- Instructed by member **Janet Hirayama.**
- Class fee of $20 includes all basic materials.
- To reserve your spot, contact **Rev. Naoya Okano** at naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com or call / text him at (626) 233-2359.

Upcoming L.A. Women's Club Events

- ***Chile Relleno* Cooking Class** – Sunday, July 26, at 10 a.m. Learn to make the classic Mexican stuffed-pepper dish, instructed by **Mariko Locheo.** Class fee is $10/person.
- **Craft & Bento Fair** – Saturday, October 3, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Want to be a vendor? Contact **Pam Shaklan** at pamshak@hotmail.com or (818) 216-4102.

Let's Celebrate Our 2026 Graduates!

It's time for our annual celebration of graduating students, parents, and grandparents. The Los Angeles and Sacramento churches will be honoring graduates at their annual recognition programs in July.

If you have a student in the family who will be graduating this year from elementary, middle or high school, college, or graduate school, submit their name to be honored. Application forms are available from your branch office. **Completed forms are due by June 21.**

L.A. Church Celebrates Easter

The Los Angeles Gedatsu Church welcomed members and friends to its annual Easter Appreciation Service, led by Reverend Naoya Okano and Reverend Takao Kojima. Cookie Barthel served as emcee. See page 6 to read Reverend Naoya's sermon, "We Can Experience Resurrection in Our Lives."

Following their Sunday School class (photo upper right), children in attendance joined the congregation to greet a special visitor, Peter Cottontail (Grieben "Poli" Campos, son-in-law of members Sandra and Max Martinez). Peter then led the children outside for the traditional Easter egg hunt. Thanks to the efforts of a 10-person, egg-hiding team, more than 1,000 plastic Easter eggs were hidden – much to the delight of the children, who gathered 40 eggs each! *Egg-cellent!*

The congregation enjoyed a delicious and colorful Easter luncheon and treats (photos at right) hosted by Jo Ann Kaku and her hospitality team. The Social Hall and outside patio were filled with "egg-cited," grateful attendees.

Sharing Joy and Community through Baking

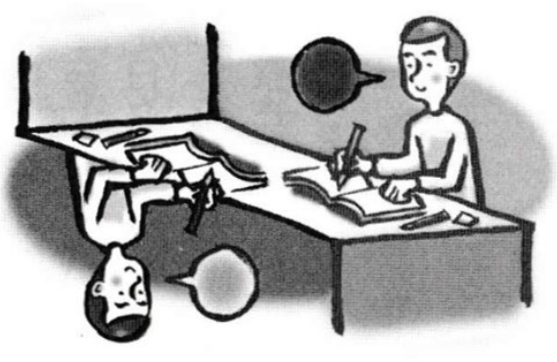
As part of the L.A. Women's Club monthly cultural events, Yukie Sira, at left, shared her baking expertise by teaching attendees how to prepare orange muffins with cream filling. While their muffins baked, participants enjoyed muffins that Yukie had prepared in advance and proudly took home their own yummy creations to share with their families.

Beana Tsujimura assisted Nanami Okano in piping the cream filling into the muffin batter.

Gedatsu Study Series: "The Practice of Humility, Poverty, and Death" – Part 3

"The Practice of Humility" – Part 1
Translated and reprinted from
The Gedatsu Magazine – Japan 2022

Why is the "Practice of Humility, Poverty, and Death" necessary? To answer this, we will first explore the elements that hinder our practice by examining the opposites of "humility" ("being a fool"), a concept for which there is no explicit definition by **Gedatsu Kongo**.



The late **Archbishop Eizan Kishida** noted that before he encountered this teaching, he thought: *"I want to be great. I don't want to be looked down on. I don't want to be poor. I don't want to get injured or sick."* However, he stated that this teaching completely transformed his worldview.

Certainly, no one wishes to be a fool, to be poor, or to face death. Yet, there is a reason why we must intentionally embrace these "negative" states. The following anecdote illustrates this.

Adversity Makes a Man

When Tsunao Okumura, who later became the third president of Nomura Securities Co., Ltd., was young, he had a meeting with Yasuzaemon Matsunaga, a titan of the business world. Hoping to impress him, Okumura spoke eloquently and at length about his personal theories on the nation and society.

Matsunaga replied: *"Mr. Okumura, your flowery speech is so superficial it makes my teeth ache. Listen well with the ears of your heart. For a business person to become truly successful, they must experience three things: first, a long period of unemployment; second, a long period of fighting illness; and third, a long period of imprisonment. If a person experiences and overcomes all three, they are truly great. At the very least, if you haven't passed through one of these, you aren't even a novice business person."*

The three conditions Matsunaga mentioned represent the absolute depths of despair and adversity. They are situations in which one loses social credibility, titles, and relationships with friends and family. However, time spent in such hardship works powerfully on the heart. It cultivates the ability to see the fundamental principles that move the world, provides a broad perspective, and builds the internal strength, or grit, to carry out one's mission.

The first half of Gedatsu Kongo's life was also a continuous series of hardships, including serious illness and years of wandering. As the saying goes, "Adversity makes a man," i.e., hardship polishes the gem. There is no doubt that these numerous trials polished and elevated Gedatsu Kongo's character.

However, for those of us living ordinary lives, we rarely fall into such extreme crises. Therefore, the goal of practicing "Humility, Poverty, and Death" is to intentionally place ourselves in a "difficult" state of mind to polish our own hearts.

"Humility" vs. "Cleverness"

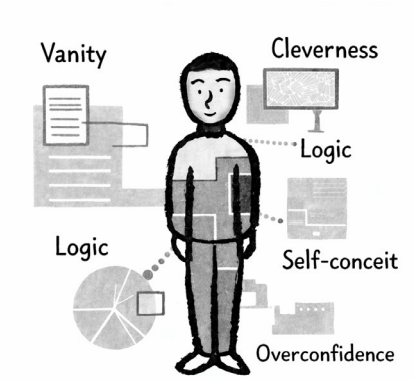
While there are many mentions of "humility" in the *Goseikun**, there is no single, explicit definition. However, its importance is explained through its opposites: "cleverness," "self-conceit," "logic," "overconfidence," "pride," "vanity," and "acting superior."

(Continued on page 5)

* The 10-volume "Holy Precepts of the Gedatsu Church" published by *Gedatsu-kai* Japan.

(***Practice of Humility*** *– Continued from page 4)*

For instance, "cleverness" is described as: *"a petty decoration . . . requiring hidden tricks and manipulation . . . stiffening the shoulders . . . never lasting long before the tail shows . . . rejecting goodness . . . burning with jealousy and pride."* It concludes that *"cleverness and logic are, in the end, byproducts of self-conceit."*



Regarding "logic," it is often preceded by adjectives like "extraordinary," "petty," "worthless," or "foolish." It is completely rejected as *"the first obstacle"* and something that *"extinguishes courage and passion."* "Self-conceit" is further described as *"a delusion of thinking one is great . . . the beginning of a person's decline . . . ignoring duty and humanity . . . a pitfall for those who forget blessings and gratitude."* We are taught that the root of self-conceit is vanity. From these words, we see that cleverness, logic, and self-conceit are character flaws that bring unnecessary suffering. At their core lies vanity — the desire to appear better than one actually is.

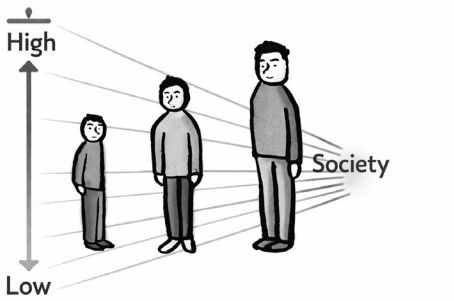
The Vanity within Everyone

Everyone possesses vanity. *Goseikun* includes the following story based on a famous and humorous tale:

"There was a man who, instead of drinking sake, ate sake lees (the mash left over from sake production). He would pretend to be drunk out of vanity. When a friend caught him, he accidentally confessed his situation.

"When they met again, he insisted, 'Today, I really drank sake!' When asked if it was chilled or heated, he blurted out, 'I drank it toasted!'

"To 'toast' sake is ridiculous, but he was so desperate to hide his vanity. The third time they met, he tried to be more careful and said, "Today I enjoyed some nice hot sake.' But when the cynical friend pressed him, asking, 'How many bottles did you have?' the man panicked, held up two fingers, and said, 'I had two slices!' Thus, he accidentally revealed the truth — that he had once again only eaten two slices of sake lees."



Human society can be like a "sample fair" of personalities, where how we are treated often depends on how we are evaluated. Since rewards and status change based on evaluation, the desire for a higher reputation exists in everyone. For those with high self-esteem, being looked down upon is unbearable.

As this story shows, vanity only leads to extra hardship. Once you put on an act, you must remember the lie forever and constantly worry about being "found out." Furthermore, no matter how well you dress it up, people around you often sense the vanity. Gedatsu Kongo pointed out that "living a life of cleverness is full of hardship." Indeed, "cleverness" and "vanity" are ways of life burdened with constant struggle.

"We Can Experience Resurrection in Our Lives"

Sermon by **Reverend Naoya Okano**

L.A. Gedatsu Church – Easter Program, Sunday, April 19

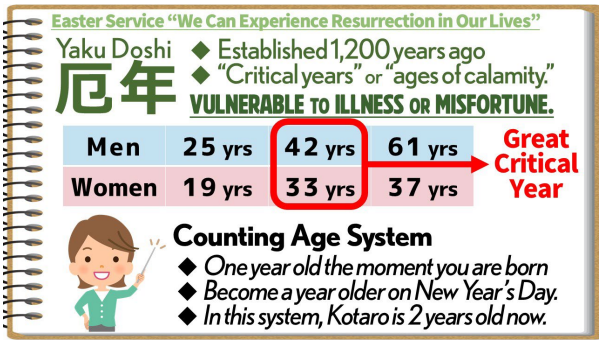
Easter is one of the most important holidays in Christianity. It celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ three days after his crucifixion. Thus, Easter is widely recognized as a time to celebrate rebirth, new life, and the arrival of spring.

While this is a Christian tradition, Gedatsu is a non-sectarian study that respects all religious faiths and values the cultures and traditions of all people. Our founder, Gedatsu Kongo, taught us that "Gedatsu is equally open to everyone. There are no borders."

When we look up at the sky or across the ocean, we see no boundaries. When we recognize such Universal Law in nature, we can respect one another and work together for world peace and happiness for all people as friends who walk toward the same goal. That is why we celebrate Easter in our Gedatsu Church.

Today, I would like to talk about the ancient Japanese concept of *Yakudoshi* and what it means to experience "resurrection" within one's life.

Yakudoshi is a social tradition established in Japan more than 1,200 years ago. It refers to three specific years of age, called "critical years" or "ages of calamity." *Yakudoshi* years differ by gender. For men, they are ages 25, 42, and 61. For women, they are 19, 33, and 37. These three years – including the year preceding and following them – are seen as times when one is more vulnerable to illness or misfortune. In particular, age 42 for men and 33 for women are known as *Dai-yaku*—the Great Critical Year.

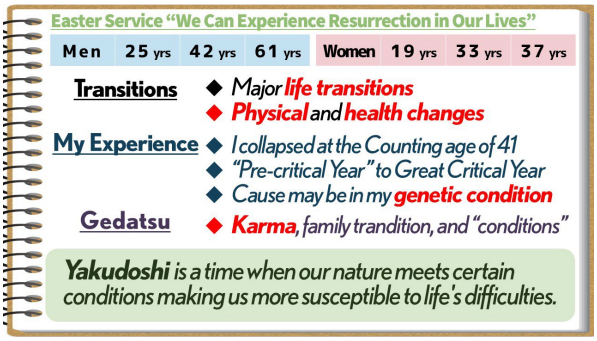


These ages are calculated using the historical Asian "counting age" system, in which you are one year old the moment you are born and become a year older on New Year's Day.

For example, my son Kotaro was born last year, but using the "counting age" calculation, he is already two years old. So, you can think of *Yakudoshi* as being about one or two years younger than your actual age.

Why were these years considered "critical"? Socially, these ages often coincide with major life transitions—starting a career, marriage, or parenthood. Physically, they are periods when our health, autonomic nervous system, and hormonal balance undergo significant changes.

Many of you may know that last June, I collapsed due to heart arrhythmia. I lost consciousness and hovered between life and death. At that time, in "counting age," I was 41—the "Pre-critical Year" leading up to the Great Critical Year.



When I went for a medical check-up this past February, my cardiologist told me that my arrhythmia might have been caused by a genetic condition called "Brugada Syndrome." Even if you have the genetic trait, it may never manifest throughout your life. I felt as though a "switch" inside me simply happened to flip on at that moment.

I believe that *Yakudoshi* was the way our ancestors statistically identified these periods when internal changes or life stressors are most likely to "flip the switch" and manifest as challenges.

(Continued on back page)

APRIL 2026 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: $7,406

General Donations: A. Sebe, J. Detwiler / J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, K. Ogawa, M. Fukushima, No Name, R. Ide, R. Yamamura, S. McSwain, W. Dillon

Special Acknowledgments

Spring Grand Festival	M/M N. Okano, M/M S. Shaklan, J. Tanaka, V. Matsuura, M/M Ho. Tsujimura, A. Tsujimura, M/M T. Kojima, M/M T. Ishida, M/M K. Kuritani, K. Kuritani, H. Nakamura, A. Akashi / P. Tomita, Do. Shiroishi, M/M J. Horner, M/M D. Ide, M/M D. Tsuboi, M/M S. Mukai ($1,000), Gedatsu-kai Japan ($1,000)
M/M D. Ide	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service April Appreciation
J. Tanaka	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service in memory of Masashi Russell Ota and Henry Toshio Tateishi
M/M P. Tateishi	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service appreciation
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
K. Kitasoe	In memory of Richard Kitasoe
K. Ota-Schubert	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service in memory of Masashi Russel Ota
S. Yabut	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service in memory of Mas Ota
M/M C. Tanaka	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service appreciation
G./M. Tahara	In memory of Kiyoko Oto

Southern California Total: $3,995

General: M/M N. Chodor, A. DeWitt, M/M M. Hamada, J. Hamamoto, T. Ishida, S. Kaku, M/M T. Kojima, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M T. Matsumoto, Anonymous, M/M V. Mizokami, M/M S. Mukai, T. Murakami P. Muronaka, M. Nakamura, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, M/M A. Shiroishi, D. Shiroishi, Y. Sira, M. Takahashi, N. Takara, A. Tsujimura, L. Young, H. Nakamura, H. Yamashita.

Special Acknowledgments

Kaku Families	"Never Forgotten" Service for Thomas Mahoney
K. Nakamura	In memory of Larry Nakamura
J. Shiroishi	"Never Forgotten" Service for Pat Shiroishi
Mahoney Families	"Never Forgotten" Service for Thomas Mahoney
M. Banker	In memory of Larry Nakamura
M/M S. Shiroishi	"Never Forgotten" Service for Margaret Nakamura and Shiroishi relatives
J. Hamamoto	In memory of Ben Hamamoto
K. Nakamura	In memory of Larry Nakamura
J. Reid	"Never Forgotten" Service for Tomoyo Ogura
De. Shiroishi	Appreciation for Goreichi Spring Festival

Online Donations: Total: $402

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

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

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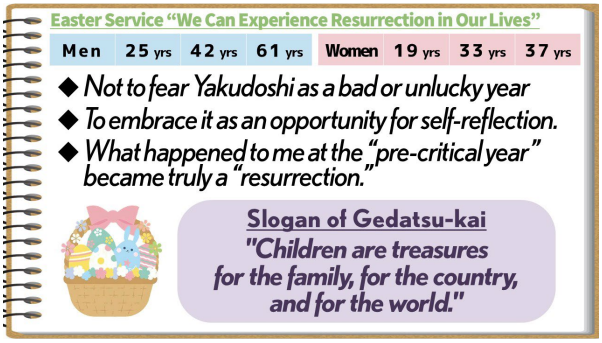
*(**"Resurrection"** – Continued from page 6)*

In Buddhism and Gedatsu teachings, we speak of *in-nen,* or karma, as well as conditions. Karma is our inherited nature or tendencies handed down through generations, and "conditions" are the environment that allows those tendencies to surface. We can understand *Yakudoshi* as a time when our nature meets certain conditions — stress, diet, or lifestyle — making us more susceptible to life's difficulties.

However, the most important lesson is not to fear *Yakudoshi* as a bad or unlucky year, but to embrace it as an opportunity for self-reflection.



Since my collapse last year, I have become truly unshakeable. I feel the words of our founder—"appreciate just for being allowed to live"—in every fiber of my being. Even when things go wrong, I think, "Well, I'm alive, so it's okay."

Even my wife Yuko has been changed. She now feels that as long as I'm alive, that's enough. Even when I am being lazy and just lounging around on my day off playing Nintendo Switch, she says, "Thank you for being alive." What a wonderful wife I have!

Through this experience, I feel as though I am living my life a second time. To me, this is truly a "resurrection." Perhaps *yaku*, or calamity, is not just misfortune, but an entrance to living life anew.

Today, our children will participate in the Easter egg hunt. Children are the hope of our future for all of us. A slogan of Japan *Gedatsu-kai* is: "Children are treasures — for the family, the country, and the world." Every child is equally precious. Let us watch over them with warmth and pour our love into these treasures of the Earth.

On this day of celebrating the Resurrection, I have shared with you the Japanese wisdom of *Yakudoshi* as a form of "life's resurrection." By finding meaning within our challenges rather than fearing them, I believe we can all be reborn, again and again.