

### **HATSU GOMA/NEW YEAR'S DAY RITE, January 1st**

The first Goma Prayer Service is conducted to pray for health and prosperity. Those attending the service have the opportunity to be blessed by the ministers and receive an ofuda (talismans) to ward off misfortune. Mochi (sweet rice cakes) are given to those born on the Chinese zodiac year. Hamaya (lucky arrows), Ema (wooden plaque), Omikujii (fortune slips), and Omamori (amulet) are available for the New Year.

### **HATSU DAISHI & GOMA, January 21st**

Kōbō Daishi entered into eternal meditation on March 21, 835 A.D. In homage to Kōbō Daishi, the 21st of every month is observed. The first Daishi Service (Hatsu Daishi) is conducted in January. In conjunction with the service, the Goma Fire Rite is performed. Kōbō Daishi introduced the ceremony to Japan from China in the 9th century.

The Goma Fire Rite originated in India. The fire of the ceremony, called the "Fire of Great Wisdom" (Dai-chika), is said to remove the darkness of ignorance and bring the light of enlightenment; thus, those attending the rite cleanse their karma. Prayer wooden sticks (gomagi) are offered to the fire.

### **HOSHI MATSURI, February 3rd**

We cannot escape the pains of birth, illness, aging and death. Happiness and health are two wishes that we hold dear. To realize these wishes and ward off misfortune, a prayer service is held at New Year's Setsubun\* according to the lunar calendar, which usually falls in February. This service is referred to as the Hoshimatsuri Prayer Service.

Hoshimatsuri literally means "Star Festival". The movements of the heavenly bodies influence all life. The ancient horoscope using the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Eclipse, Sun stars, comets, and constellations is integral to this unique Shingon Esoteric Service.

\*Setsubun is the ceremony of cleansing and driving away evil spirits that bring misfortune by throwing fuku mame (good luck beans). It is customary to eat roasted soybeans, one for each year of your life, to bring in good luck.

### **SPRING/AUTUMN HIGAN, March/September 21st**

"Higan" is taken from "Tō-Higan" which means from this world of ignorance and suffering (Samsari) to the other shore of enlightenment and peace (Nirvana). During the service, we pay homage to our ancestors and remind ourselves to practice the teaching of the Buddha by observing the Six Paramitas.

- *Giving, generosity, and charity*
- *Self-restraint, discipline, and personal integrity*
- *Patience, tolerance, endurance, and acceptance*
- *Effort and diligence*
- *Meditation, concentration, and mindfulness*
- *Wisdom, insight, understanding and tranquility*

Higan festivals are held at the spring and autumn equinox in Japan.

### **HANA MATSURI, April 8th**

*Flower Festival Celebrating the Birth of Shakyamuni Buddha*

When Baby Buddha was born, it was said that as he took seven steps forward and with one hand pointed to the sky and the other pointed to earth, he declared, "Above and below the heavens, I am most noble." It was his way of saying that the gift of human life is the greatest gift that we can ever receive. The seven steps signify that Buddha transcends the six realms of existence and his declaration is an expression of his confidence to save all beings.

"Hanamatsuri" means festival of flowers and refers to the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha in Lumbini Garden in India. Service is held to honor his birth. Sweet tea is poured over a statue of infant Buddha that is set in a small altar surrounded by flowers.

### **SHOMIE-KU, April 21st**

*"When space is exhausted*

*When all creatures disappear,*

*When Nirvana vanishes.*

*Then and only then shall my vow be fulfilled."*

"Shomie-Ku" means the ritual (Ku) of recollecting the holy (Sho) image (Mie) of Kōbō Daishi, founder of Japanese Shingon Esoteric Buddhism and master of Japanese culture. Service is held to commemorate the day that Kōbō Daishi entered eternal meditation on March 21, 835 A.D.

### **AOBA MATSURI, June 15th**

Service is held to honor the birth of Kōbō Daishi (Kukai). He was born on June 15, 774 A.D. at Zentsuji, Kagawa Prefecture, Shikoku Island, Japan. His family was members of the aristocratic Saeki family, a branch of the Otomo clan. He was called Mao as a child.

In June, the Japanese landscape is lush and green from the seasonal rain; thus the celebration of his birth became "Aoba Matsuri", the Festival of Green Leaves.

### **OBON SEGAKI, July 15th**

Obon has been considered a memorial day for Buddhists. The word "obon" means to uproot suffering and pain. On this day we recall the warm memories of our departed loved ones and foster a relation between the living and deceased. The Japanese believe that the spirits of the departed return to earth on Obon Day.

The rituals of Obon originated at the time of Buddha in India. From the legend of Moggallana, food and water are offered to the deceased. The religious act of sprinkling water over wooden tablets (kyogi) with the written names of the deceased is called Segaki. Candlelight is offered by families and friends who have lost a loved one since the previous year's Obon.

### **MEMORIAL FOR A-BOMB VICTIMS, August 6th**

A joint memorial service, sponsored by the Hiroshima-Nagasaki A-Bomb survivors (ASA) and the Los Angeles Koyasan Betsuin, is held to remember the victims of the atomic bomb blasts over Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (August 9, 1945), and to pray for world peace.

A flame from the Hiroshima Peace Park was brought to the Temple in 1984.

### **JIZO BON & OKURIBI, August 24th**

Jizo statues are washed and decorated with new red bibs and hats. Offerings are made to thank them for protecting our children. Special tribute is made to Mizuko Jizo Bon who is the guardian of unborn, aborted, miscarried, and stillborn babies. A memorial service is conducted for infants who died before birth or within the first year of life.

"Okuribi" means "send-off" fire. The wooden tablets (kyogi) from Obon are burned, signifying that the spirits of the departed return back to the other world after their yearly visit.

The services are held in the Temple courtyard.

### **SHICHI-GO-SAN (7-5-3), November 15th**

Shichi-Go-San is a rite of passage for girls of three (san) and seven (shichi) years and boys of three (san) and five (go) years. The tradition is said to have originated in the Heian Period amongst the nobles and over time passed to the samurai class. By the Edo Period (1603-1868), the rite was adopted by the commoners and included the ritual of visiting a shrine or temple to pray for the children's wellbeing, health, and growth.

At the service, prayers are offered and the fire ritual is conducted. Children are blessed, received amulet/talisman, and presented stick candy. This is also a "day for pictures." Children come dressed in kimonos or Sunday attire. Toyo Mlyatake Studio (626-289-5674) is available to take individual and/or family photos. Tokyo Bridal & Tuxedo provides kimono rentals (213-617-3595).

## **BODHI DAY, December 8th**

Service is held to commemorate the day when Siddhartha Gotama experienced enlightenment (“bodhi”) and became the Buddha (the “Awakened One”); and to remember his teachings, which he imparted to us as the “Four Noble Truths”:

- *All beings are subject to suffering. No one escapes ... suffering is universal.*
- *The cause of suffering is ignorance. And ignorance of oneself is the greatest ignorance.*
- *Ignorance, the cause of suffering, can be removed.*
- *The way of removing ignorance is the “Eightfold Noble Path.”*

## **YEAR-END, December 31st**

For the last service of the year, “Toshi-no-se”, the temple bell is rung 108 times. In Buddhist belief, we are plagued by 108 misleading karma (bonno). With each ring, a misled karma is removed. Service is held to express our gratitude to the Buddha and Kōbō Daishi for their guidance and protection.

## **MONTHLY GOMA, Last Sunday (February-November)**

Kōbō Daishi introduced the “Goma Fire Rite” from China. The ceremony originated about five thousand years ago in India. The rite, called the “Fire of Great Wisdom” (Dai-chika), leads us to emancipation, removing the darkness of ignorance and bringing the light of enlightenment. By attending the ritual, members destroy their bad karma. Prayer wooden sticks (gomagi) are offered/burned.

The Goma Mantra is: *Nomaku sammada bazaradan senda makaroshada sowataya un tarata kamman.*

## **MORNING/FAMILY SERVICE, Sunday 10:00 A.M.**

The service provides members the opportunity to renew their pledge and practice the “Three Mysteries” (San-mitsu). Sermon in English and Japanese concludes the service.

## **FUNERAL, MEMORIAL, and WEDDING**

The Buddhists not only pray for the eternal peace of deceased love ones but also understand that through memorial services the departed is ever-living and existing within us. After the funeral, the most important memorials are the 49th day, 1st year, and 3rd year services. It is believed that the deceased becomes a Buddha and enters para-Nirvana on the 49th day.

## **BLESSINGS/GOKITO\***

- Baby Blessing (Hatsumairi)
- Health, Travel and Safety Blessing
- Auto, House and Business Blessing
- Yaku-Yoke Prayer (Men: 25, 42, and 61 years old; Women: 19, 33, and 37 years old)

\*Contact the Temple for information and appointment.

**Please check the Temple calendar and schedule for service dates and times.**



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# **Services of Koyasan Buddhist Temple of Los Angeles (Koyasan Beikoku Betsuin)**

高野山米国別院

