

Jizo Bodhisattva Statue

This fifteenth-century wooden statue depicts the bodhisattva Jizo, the main deity of Kenchoji Temple. Jizo is often depicted as a Buddhist monk, and has vowed not to achieve full enlightenment until the underworld is emptied of suffering souls. Jizo is considered a deity of mercy and the protector of travelers and children.

Small statues of Jizo, often wearing a red cap and bib, are commonly seen in graveyards and by roadsides in Japan. However, it is rare for Jizo to be the main deity of a large temple.

Before Kenchoji was established in 1253, a section of the grounds was an execution site. A Jizo statue was enshrined there to pray for the souls of those who had been executed. When Kenchoji was built, the monks carried on that mission.

To pray, put your palms together and bow deeply, thinking of something that is important to you. After praying, you may put an optional donation into the wooden collection box.