

Becoming Apostles of Justice

The term "apostle" is derived from Koine Greek and means one who is sent for as a messenger. "Apostle" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "shaliah." An apostle can be a missionary, representative or ambassador. He or she may be called upon to spread a message through both words and acts. The work may be hard. An apostle is often met with doubt, cynicism, disdain or even open hostility. Only great faith in the message will enable the apostle to continue his or her work. As this year's CASD President, my goal is to provide each of you tools to become true apostles of justice. And I hope to lead by example.

by John H. Gomez

Who Are Trial Lawyers?

It has taken me awhile, but I have finally figured out a few things about being a trial lawyer. First, we have the greatest job in the world. We help real people every day and are always on the right side of justice. We truly have a lot to be thankful for. Second, there are a lot of people out there that hate us. It's not their fault. They just don't know any better. Big corporate and insurance dollars have been spent to portray us as greedy, destructive and selfish. And there have been some trial lawyers out there that deserve the labels. Shame on them. But the other 99% of us doing the right thing every day have a lot of catching up to do. That's the third thing. If we hope to have any chance of survival, we need to show who we really are. It means we have to be better than the other side. We need to be better lawyers and better human beings — every day and in everything we do. Simply put, we have a responsibility. Each of us needs to be an apostle of justice.

A graduate of Yale Law School and Gerry Spence's Trial Lawyer's College, John H. Gomez is CASD's President for 2012. John believes passionately in improving our world through both the law and community service. John's community passions are the Latino community, kids at risk, drunk driving prevention, foster children and legal services for the indigent. CASD has twice named John "Trial Lawyer of the Year" and has awarded him six "Outstanding Trial Lawyer" awards. His Gomez Law Firm is an eight-attorney consumer law firm dedicated exclusively to community service, catastrophic personal injury and mass tort litigation. Most importantly, John is the devoted husband of Lisa and the proud father of son "JD" and twins Michael and Analise.



Leading by Example

I won't ask any of you to do anything I'm not willing to do myself first so...

Our law firm has a mission statement. One of our core values is that we should act as "civic, philanthropic and political leaders." Most importantly, we set out to make a difference through good works as human beings. I think we have done a pretty good job of that in our first five years. As I write this column, it's November. This month, we have been busy doing good things in the community at the Gomez Law Firm. Three weeks ago, we put together a team for the MADD walk; two weeks ago, we sponsored both the La Raza Lawyers Scholarship dinner and the NFAR autism Halloween carnival; and last weekend, we got out to walk for breast cancer research. Our team loves pitching in and making a difference. Doing good deeds soon becomes a habit. It's pretty cool.

Later this month, I get to sponsor one of my favorite events of the year: our annual National Latino Peace Officers Association Thanksgiving Dinner for at-risk kids. Basically, we treat a bunch of kids to a Thanksgiving dinner that otherwise would never have one. And we give them gift certificates and some mentorship to boot. It's really an awesome event. At my firm, we do stuff like that constantly. And other stuff too. We have sent iPads to injured Marines and police officers, chaired Boards and charity events, and coached, volunteered, tithed and written checks all over town. And we are not quiet about it. We let the world know that we are trial lawyers and what we are doing. Think you don't have the time or money to do what we do? Think again. We run a pretty intense trial practice. We find the time. And we feel like

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we make all that money and time back in multiples. Maybe it's karma, maybe word gets out that we really are decent people, or maybe we are just happier about our jobs and life generally. I don't know the answer for sure, but it's really worked for us. I want all of you to be as happy and fulfilled as we are.

Boaz: a Good Horse

I attended Gerry Spence's Trial Lawyers College this year. Early in the session, we all gathered in the "big barn" to watch a couple grainy videos from some of the founders of the college who are no longer with us. In one, John Johnson, a former close friend of Spence, tells a story about taking a walk one day and finding an engraving on a rock tablet in the ground. It read: "Boaz: A Good Horse." Johnson explained how the simplicity of the message was the highest form of compliment. He suggested that each of us should strive to simply be the very best human beings we should be. Only then could we truly reach our potential as trial lawyers.

That little story really helped me personally to continue a path that I had already begun. I now, as best I can, do my very best to be the very

best person I can be in every aspect of my life. While it seems a little preachy, I think we all need to think about Boaz from time to time. Remember, we are under attack. To avoid rebuke, we must therefore be beyond reproach. We truly need to be that good in every aspect of our life. Each of us is the trial lawyer that our friends and neighbors and associates know. I try to live my life now as if my jury was watching. I admittedly didn't always used to do that. I drank too much and stayed out too late. No more. What I have found is that living life the right way all the time gives me absolute confidence in me and the righteousness of my work. That's pretty powerful stuff. I want you all to have that too.

Consumer Attorneys Care

I really want all of you to join me as apostles of the good work we trial lawyers do. I know a lot of you already are doing great things out there. Each of us owes you a huge thank you for making us look good. So THANK YOU! For the rest of you, or if you want to join your brother and sister trial lawyers in community service, we are aggressively rolling out our "Consumer Attorneys Care"

program this year. A program of the CASD Foundation, CAC is dedicated to providing opportunities for trial attorneys, their family, clients and friends to perform charitable work throughout San Diego County. We will regularly be organizing community outreach events which we will promote both on the list serve and on our dedicated website: Attorneyscommunityservice.com. We are not only going to do great things for others, we are also going to be loud and proud about who we are and what we do. Come on out and join us in making a difference. We will even give you a cool free T-shirt if you show up!

The Seminar of the Century

As apostles of justice, we also need to be the very best lawyers we can be. We are going to help you with that, too, and at the same time motivate you to participate in our CAC events. We all need to be both great lawyers and great people. Two law firms in town have led by example as long as any of us have known: Casey Gerry Francavilla Blatt and Penfield and Thorsnes Bartolotta McGuire. These giants of justice have agreed to

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join my firm in sponsoring a seminar in March that is going to blow your socks off. Dave Casey, Rob Francavilla, Vince Bartolotta, Mickey McGuire, Kevin Quinn, Robert Hamparyan, James Iagmin . . . the list goes on. C'mon! You are going to hear from all of them and more. And we are going to cover the costs! The reason we are doing it is because we want to get all of you involved in the good work we have planned. The only thing you need to do to get a seat is join us at a CAC event before March. We will provide you plenty of opportunities. So get out and volunteer with us and then sit back and enjoy the best seminar we have ever presented. Seating will be limited, so get your work in soon!

Helping Those That Help us

I am lucky enough to work with great lawyers from all over the country. And you know what? They all want to be here: in California. They want to be here because "tort reform" legislation in their states has virtually wiped out their ability to obtain full justice for their clients. CAOC has done an unbelievable job of promoting both our issues and our candidates. It takes money. Compared to

what it could cost you down the road, it's penny wise and pound foolish not to give. My firm generously supports both CAOC and political candidates that support fair and reasonable justice. During my year, I will be asking you to join me in that giving. It's part of your responsibility.

Spreading the Gospel

As President, I believe I have a unique responsibility not only to lead by example but to spread our message personally. To that end, I am putting together a presentation that tells, as radio personality Paul Harvey used to say, "the rest of the story" about trial lawyers and what we do. I intend to "barnstorm" around the County talking about the great work you all do. If you want to come along some time, or want a copy of my power-point and handouts, let me know. It would be great to have a bunch of us out there spreading the good word.

Friday Breakfasts

As you may have figured out already, my whole presidency will be about "outreach." I want to show the community what great human beings trial lawyers are. I want to help

spread our message. I want to ensure that we have strong ambassadors in the political world. Lastly, but most importantly, I want to reach out to each of you. As part of that, I will be hosting regular Friday breakfasts throughout the County and at different locations. My treat. Let's hook up and talk about your practices, your concerns, your cases and whatever else you want to talk about. We will announce times and locations as the year goes on.

Never Stand Alone

Jesus sent out his apostles in pairs of two. Likewise, I don't think any of you should ever have to fight alone. If you have a trial coming up, find yourself overwhelmed or intimidated, or just need some help, let me know. I will either help you myself or I will find you some help. We apostles need to stick together and nobody is going to mess with us as long as we embrace our righteous cause and stick together. I'm very excited to lead such a great group of trial lawyers and human beings. **Let's go fight the good fight and spread the gospel together! TBN**



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