

# OUR MISSION IN LIFE

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Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1939 - 1987

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*The son of H. Spencer Lewis, Ralph M. Lewis was a prolific author, photographer, humanitarian, and Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC from 1939 to 1987. In addition to his many books, pamphlets, and other writings, he was instrumental in helping grow AMORC to the international organization it is today, and commissioned the building of the current Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum in 1966.*

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Here are two principal proclivities in life which move a person to action – aside from the commanding physical desires and appetites upon the satisfaction of which existence itself depends. The first is obligation; the second is idealism. The obligations are those which our personal moral concepts and adopted standards of ethics cause us to feel must be met, and that without doing so, there would be no peace of mind. Such obligations, as to their nature and the form they assume, are as varied as men's interests

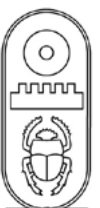


and activities. What one feels a solemn obligation in life, another might not. Such obligations might consist of the care of parents, a college education for each child of the immediate family, the rectifying of wrongs done to a relative, and the repayment of a sum of money to prevent a stigma. The ideals, on the other hand, may be those which the individual aspires to as the end in life – the very reason why he wants to live and from which he gains a positive pleasure or joy. These ideals may be referred to as ambitions.

Of course, fulfilling an obligation provides a sense of satisfaction as well, but it is of a negative nature. We all have a sense of relief when we have performed a lengthy and trying task or fulfilled a duty, but it is not the same exaltation we experience when realizing an ideal. The fulfillment of an obligation is like the removing of a disturbing condition or an irritant. It just returns us to our status quo. But the realizing of an ideal is an additional stimulus. We have not just removed something; we have gained something. Consequently, it can be seen that people by their moral sense are often

compelled to choose, as their mission in life, something which is not exactly the thing they would like to do, but what they want to do under the circumstances.

The question really before us is: Which is the right mission, the ideal or the obligation – presuming that we have both? The answer to this would probably be, the intermediate way – striving reasonably to meet a reasonable obligation and alike to seek to attain the ideal. We are fully aware that a division of efforts under many circumstances is not advisable. But if the individual has both ideals and commanding



obligations, she must take an intermediate course or not truly be fulfilling her mission in life. It must be realized that obligations which we assume, and even create for ourselves, are not really as vital as we sometimes believe them to be. We do not mean by this that because some do not consider them important, they are not, but rather that some are actually not inherently so.

Our emotions as we all have occasion to know, greatly influence the value that we attach to many things, as well as does that innate sensitivity that constitutes our talents. One inclined toward art has a greater natural appreciation of the harmony of color, line, proportion, and perspective than one who is not. His reason, consequently, causes him to measure the worth of things by their beauty and artistic value. He will contribute an importance to things which others may disregard. We need not, at this time, enter into a discussion as to whether beauty is immanent in the object, or in a person's mind. The fact that something is beautiful to someone is the important factor. These emotions we have may cause one to imagine or to bring about in his mind excessive obligations. Thus one might have the passion to vindicate a parent from what he believes constitutes a slur against the parent's reputation. He dwells upon it, builds it up to such an all-consuming desire that nothing else matters but to right what he conceives as a wrong. He pushes into the background those interests which would ordinarily constitute his ideals and ambitions. Actually, this passion has made his obligations, as he conceives them, his mission in life; but from an impassionate view, his concept of his mission is distorted.



There are, however, certain arbitrary yardsticks of measurement which we can use to determine what should be our mission in life. These standards are an admixture of cosmic obligations and personal satisfactions and enjoyments. Every sacred tome which contains inspired writings of mystics and sages and their cosmic revelations – whether these tomes are the basis of religious precepts or philosophical discourses – usually contains an admonition of a person's duty to humankind. People must recognize the brotherhood of humankind. A person must realize that she has a divine heritage – the right as a person to give the highest expression in material form of the divine within her. She must never violate the trust, as people frequently do. She must create about her in matter, as Plato said, forms that express the idea of beauty which she inwardly senses. She must create on Earth and portray them in her conduct those things which will reflect the spiritual realm. She must work with her fellows and also maintain her individuality.

Looking at civilization as a whole, though it is somewhat battered, humankind has done fairly well. It consequently behooves each person in some way to contribute something – small or large – to human society and well being, and not work for himself alone. One who sweeps the streets and sweeps them well, with an understanding of the importance of his task in relationship to humanity, and not to get it done so that it will merely pass inspection, is doing as much in a humble way as the bacteriologist working in a laboratory seeking to find a way to stem the spread of a disease.

One who seeks a job or position to get by is obviously abrogating this cosmic law. She conceives her mission in life as attaining just that which will further her end and without any consideration of the rest of humankind. One should always attempt to find employment in those occupations, trades, or professions that bring one pleasure, that one likes to do.

This is not only because it makes work more enjoyable and removes it from the class of grueling tasks, but because it commands the best in a person, and he gives without unconscious restraint all of his ability and talent. However, if one insists on doing those things that he likes to do, even though he is unqualified or untrained in them, keeping one who is qualified from doing them, he is not pursuing his true mission in life because, again, he is selfish. He thinks only of his own gratification. He has not taken into consideration the results of his work as to whether or not they are a contribution to society. One has found his true mission in life when he is able to give wholeheartedly of himself, when his heart rings with joy with each hour's labor.

Do not confuse eminence and distinction with your mission in life. If you have a longing to work at some menial task that you know you can do well, and which is constructive, DO IT, whether your name will be on the lips of your fellows or not! There are many in prominent places today who are not, and they know they are not, fulfilling their true place in life. Ego has caused them to push into the background their finer and higher sentiments. When the world is in a turmoil and severe

economic upheaval prevails, one of course cannot always immediately step onto the path that leads to her mission in life. She cannot always find the job or the work that represents it. She must bide her time.

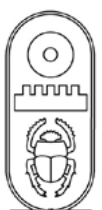
We said at the beginning that a person is moved by obligations and ideals in life, aside from his instincts and desires. These instincts and desires are impelling and often

must be served first. One must eat, drink, and shelter himself and family before fulfilling a mission in life.

Success in a personal mission in life is greatly dependent upon our relationship to others. Intolerance works against personal attainment. Do we really know at times that we are intolerant in our views?

How can individuals avoid an attitude of personal intolerance? In fact, why do so many oppose the different views and actions of others – even when their content is not harmful? The cause lies in the human ego and the instinctive urge of self to assert itself. We are disposed to give ourselves over entirely to our instincts and desires whenever the opportunity affords itself. We are a composite, not just of our thoughts, but also of our emotional responses and desires.

It becomes difficult for many persons to so detach desire from self as to impersonally analyze its worth in relation to the welfare of others. Consequently, we ordinarily defend a personal interest, belief, or desire exactly as we would our physical person. We seek to advance such beliefs and favor such intellectual desires as vigorously as we seek out ways and means of gaining our sustenance.





In this instinctive aggression, this promoting of our desires of self, we trespass upon the rights and dignity of other human beings.

We conflict with their hopes, aspirations, and beliefs – and they have an equal and inalienable right to express them. We cannot construe our personal welfare to mean that all counter thoughts and desires necessarily jeopardize our being and must, therefore, be opposed. Such a concept would destroy society. It would set against her neighbor each individual who thought or acted differently from another. We find this behavior among many of the lower animals which are not gregarious. However, it is not worthy of people and defeats those elements of humanity's nature which require unified effort and group living.

This intolerance can be rectified by an attitude of forbearance. Forbearance consists of some restraint of our animal instincts. It is nothing more than a form of personal discipline and sacrifice to restrain ourselves in some regard, to be willing to forego some of the enjoyment of our physical senses and personal powers in order to allow others to do the same.

If we examine every instance of intolerance, we shall find that the individual

did not necessarily want to injure someone or deprive him of his rights, even though his actions amounted to that. It was really because he was concerned only with his own interests and satisfying his own desires that he violated the sanctity of the self of someone else.

We are not truly exercising all of our potentialities if we allow desire and instinct to solely motivate us in our relations with others. To attain the highest human relations necessitates a rational understanding of the common human welfare. We can and must discipline ourselves. We cannot live alone. We must sacrifice something of our own satisfaction for the collective good in which we want to participate.

Strange as it may seem, freedom sometimes becomes an obstacle to tolerance. Thoughtlessly insisting on a personal freedom or what we interpret it to be interferes with the liberalism of tolerance. Freedom is the exercise of will; it is conforming to what we want to do or have the desire to do. If, however, we exercise our personal wills to their fullest extent as a display of freedom, we cannot be tolerant! We must impose forbearance on will and the instinctive desire for freedom if we are to know tolerance and the peace which follows from it.

