

September is the very best month of all to think about new beginnings.

Children have returned to school, vacations are over, summer visitors have left and the weather is wonderful. It is a perfect time to reflect and regroup.

Have you lost your job? Are you retired? Burned out? Disabled? Widowed? Divorced? Bereaved? Thinking about starting your own business? Are you adjusting to an “empty nest” or becoming restless for a different challenge in your career? Are you seeking a meaningful volunteer opportunity?

It amazes me that people will generally spend far more time researching what house or car to buy or what cell phone plan to use than they will spend developing a direction and objectives for the different stages of their lives.

We will perform volunteer work simply because we have been asked; we will take jobs because they have been offered. We will make critical lifetime decisions based solely upon such considerations as the salary offered, the driving distance, the hours required and the benefits available. Many of us have a strong inclination to focus primarily on what others expect us to do.

We do not always view choices about how to apply the individual sets of skills and talents that we have inherited or acquired as important investment decisions concerning the “best and highest use” of our personal resources.

Each one of us has been endowed with such a unique personality and with such a truly incomparable combination of strengths, skills and talents, it appears obvious to me that each person has a very specific function to fulfill.

Although some of us believe that we have a divine mission while others believe that we have a human purpose, it does appear that each one of us has been individually engineered to fulfill a very unique role in our lifetimes.

I believe that we are happiest, most fulfilled and most truly ourselves when we identify whatever that purpose is and then embrace it with enthusiasm.

Our purpose might be fulfilled through many different roles, avenues and outlets over the course of a lifetime, but there always seems to be a common denominator, a continuing thread underlying them, that is clearly apparent.

At times, our purpose will be expressed primarily through paid employment.

Other times, it will be expressed in parenting and caretaking roles, part time employment, volunteer opportunities, hobbies, crafts and athletic activities.

Reality factors will intrude upon our options in such a way that at times in our lives we will have more avenues for personal expression than in others.

If you are the parent of an infant, as an example, you might not even have many choices. Attending to the baby could be your sole purpose right now.

Nevertheless, we will be most truly ourselves and most fulfilled when we factor into our more limited or less limited choices and options, a very clear understanding of, appreciation of and acceptance of whatever purpose we believe that we are here in this particular place to fulfill, at this point in time.

Our purpose might not always be what we want it to be. Sometimes we will need to fulfill our roles not just with acceptance but also without resentment.

A woman I know is a professional dancer; there is no doubt at all about what she is here to do. She will joyfully stretch, spin and pirouette anytime. At the same time, there is not a chance at all that I could ever dance like that.

When we figure out what it is that we are here to do, at this point in time, and when we accept and also embrace whatever that is with courage and with grace, we will experience far greater peace and equanimity in our lives.

When contemplating future options, we limit full appreciation of ourselves by focusing on our resumes. These are just summaries of paid employment experiences, clubs joined and public accolades received. They do not portray a broad and comprehensive picture of our talents, skills and personalities.

In order to achieve useful insight, we should reflect upon accomplishments in every sphere of our lives, whether we were paid to do the task or not.

Those of us anticipating new beginnings this fall will come to learn a lot by considering various questions with respect to our roles and purposes. Ask yourself: what am I proudest of doing? What do I receive the most praise and compliments for doing? How do I express myself with the greatest joy?

Understanding with clarity what our purpose is gives us the determination and courage to proceed confidently in a new direction. We will also convey an attitude of authority as we proceed to implement our goals and objectives.