

BACCALAUREATE

time to pause and say thank you

At first glance, Baccalaureate seems to be the square peg in a world full of round holes. It just doesn't fit. As we come down the final stretch leading to graduation, the menu is full of exciting events with recipes of fun, laughter and plenty of celebration. Baccalaureate comes off as the vanilla ice cream in a world of adventurous flavors.

Many of the students and their families don't even show up for the thing. The others do so because they are the kind of people who don't want to miss any moment that has anything to do with their child's graduation.

That's too bad.

Many people think that Baccalaureate is a religious thing that is set aside for those who are into that sort of thing.

That's too bad, too.

Simply put, Baccalaureate is the pause button on the senior's fast-paced video of life. For the senior, it is a time to put the party machine on hold and take a few moments to reflect on what they have accomplished over the past twelve years. It's a time to reflect on the many sacrifices and all the support of their parents, family and friends that has brought them to this point in their journey.

For the parents, it is a time to put down the checkbooks, buckets of chicken, pennants and pom-poms, and reflect on what they and their children have accomplished over the past twelve years.

It is a time to put all the fanfare and celebration to the side and focus for a moment on two very special words...

THANK YOU

In this rat-race world of rush, rush, rushing to keep up with the Jones, where the negative, seedy side of life dominates our headlines, talk shows and evening news, 'Thank You' certainly gets low mileage in today's world of information highways.

Baccalaureate is the time set aside for all of us to pause and simply learn how to say thank you again.

As a parent, how many times have I slammed a door, steaming to myself that a simple

thank you would be nice for all the crap I have to do for her?! How many times did I feel completely unappreciated and that my daughter must think that I have absolutely no life other than hers? A simple 'thank you' from time to time would have certainly cooled a few flames.

On the other hand, I am quite confident that my daughter has often felt very frustrated with the old man as she tried to pursue those many adventures that I always encouraged her to go for, yet gave her nothing but grief along the way.

"We can't afford that!"

"I've got to be there, when?!? Why can't they do these things at a more convenient time for me?!?"

"You mean it's tonight?!? They should know better than to schedule this on a Monday night?!? For crying out loud, don't they know that my Chargers are playing the Raiders!?!?"

I am certain that as a parent, I have missed far too many opportunities to say thank you to my daughter for all the wonderful activities and adventures she has brought into my world. Yes, even those that fell on Monday nights.

When you go to the park, you can always find a young mother telling her child to go back to the nice man and say thank you. We get off on the right track, but somehow along the way, we seem to get far too busy to remember those lessons that mother taught us at the park when we were youngsters.

A simple thank you note to family and friends who have shown kindness has become such a tedious chore for us. How sad.

A counselor once told me that she noticed that every time someone complimented me, I would always respond by making a joke. She suggested that it was impossible for me to accept a compliment without making a joke out of it.

"If someone gives you a compliment, why can't you just look at them and say thank you? Why do you have to make a joke? It's just a cute way of calling them a liar, if you ask me."

That was many years ago, but as you can tell, it still shoots right through my soul - probably because she was absolutely right. Even though I have worked hard through the years to become more sensitive to people when they compliment me, I must admit that it is still uncomfortable to simply look at them and say 'thank you'. I'd still rather make a joke.

"I love you" is the most powerful phrase in any language, in any culture, and in any religion.

Unfortunately, it is a phrase that has been much over used, watered down and far too often made synonymous with people, places and things that it should never have been connected with. 'Thank you' are the two words that give "I love you" its power. When you say thank you, you are saying I love you in its purest form.

I'm glad I went to Baccalaureate. It reminded me that good parenting isn't found by throwing money and material goods at the children, but by teaching them by your examples that the best way to express your love for them is simply by taking a moment to say thank you.

It was a time to push the pause button on all the excitement of being a senior dad, as I quietly, and admittedly tearfully, gave my daughter a hug and simply said 'thank you'. I just don't think you can say 'I love you' to your children any better than that!