

Anyone who has ever visited, lived on or near a farm ... can attest to the pungent aroma of livestock. A cattle barn, a chicken coop, and a pig pen ... all have a characteristic odor that is not soon forgotten.

Even if you've never been to a farm, most certainly you've driven past one - or perhaps had a neighbor whose garden was fastidiously fertilized by some of nature's finest.

The smell of this gets in your nose and can permeate your clothes and your hair.

And then it follows you all the way home.

In today's Gospel, we hear the familiar parable from Luke's Gospel of the Prodigal Son.

And perhaps to put it in a more visceral ... or perhaps nasal ... context, we need to realize that the younger son had been living for some time in a pig pen. Not just visiting - but living.

When he comes to his senses, and returns home - he is met by his father who embraces him and places the finest robe and sandals on him.

While Luke makes no mention of the redolence ... the stench ... that was emanating from the boy ... it only figures that he most likely carried a fragrant memory of his previous occupation.

But realize - that the father didn't hose him down first ... the son isn't sent behind the barn to clean up first. Rather, the father embraces the son without reservation and kisses him over and over.

Such is the mercy of Almighty God. Nothing can stand between us and Him - if only we were fully resolved to come home.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ - let us cast aside any hinderances ... let us lay aside any obstacles ... let us wholeheartedly resolve to return to God fully - holding nothing back. Let us cast our cares upon him and receive the graces that will draw us more deeply into the loving arms of God our Father.