

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When I lived in England and had some time free in London, I used to head for the National Gallery on Trafalgar Square in the middle of that great city. There was a favorite painting there I wanted to see. It is by the Spanish painter Murillo, and the subject is the Holy Family.

Some have also called it "The Two Trinities". Like many paintings from the seventeenth century, the artist was illustrating some wonderful theological truths. The boy Jesus occupies the central ground of the painting. He stands on a raised platform with the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph on either side. He is therefore above them and his hands reach out to hold their hands. The composition is triangular, and above his head is the dove of the Holy Spirit. Over the Holy Spirit dove we see angels holding open the clouds of heaven so we can see the Almighty Father looking down with affection and blessing.

The picture is called The Two Trinities because on the vertical axis we see the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but on the horizontal plane we see Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The Holy Family on earth therefore reflects and joins with the "Family" of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity. The powerful truth this painting illustrates is one of which we should all be reminded on this feast of the Holy Family. It is not only the Holy Family of Nazareth that reflects the family of the Holy Trinity in heaven, but it is also our own families. Marriage is a sacrament. That means it is a means of grace and a ladder to heaven. The union of one man and one woman for life that brings forth new life is a sacred and eternal joy.

In many ways, in our society the family is under attack. In the confusion of gender identity and sexual roles an increasing number of people are unsure what a man is and a woman is. With quick divorce and breakdown of the family more and more children are confused, lonely and angry because women and men are breaking the marriage bond through adultery, pornography and other forms of sin and selfishness. When we break marriage, we are breaking a holy trinity. When we break marriage, we are dishonoring our family members, but we are also dishonoring God.

At OLR we will work with you to nurture and build up our families. They are our most precious treasure. I would remind you that if you are having relationship problems, questions about sexuality and marriage and difficulties in your family, come and ask for help. Fr. Richard is a trained and licensed counselor, and I also am more than ready to listen and offer what help I can.

It is up to all of us to build up our little Holy Families so that our church, our school and our world can prosper.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker