

Buried in today's Gospel passage is one of the more telling statements Jesus gives us about his relationship with the Father, the Holy Spirit and us. Jesus has said many of the same things in other settings, but here they are brought together in one discourse. When the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth comes, the one we call the Holy Spirit, he will remain with us and be with us and we will know him. The Lord Jesus will also come to us. It's not clear, but it could be at the same time as the coming of the Holy Spirit. And then we will realize that the Jesus is in the Father, Jesus is in us and we are in Jesus. It's not said but implied that we will realize all this because this Advocate has come and is in us. When added to Jesus' other statements like "the Father and I are One," we get the basic understanding of the Trinity. Three, unified in being and purpose, acting as one. And for us, when one speaks to us, dwells in us, the effect is that we get all three because they are in each other. When you have the Holy Spirit in you, you are directly linked to Jesus and the Father. The same would be true if we say we have our primary connection with Jesus, in which case we necessarily have the Holy Spirit within us and are linked just as profoundly to the Father. But because the Persons of the Trinity aren't jealous when we identify our connection more with one of the others, they are all just as happy about it and it works magnificently.

If we are connected to the Trinity through any of the persons, we will be called at some point to give an accounting of our belief just as St. Peter writes in the second reading. What? Explain my faith. What should I say? I'm not a preacher! PANIC!

Breath. Calm down. Christians have been doing this for centuries. The only problem is that living in Christian Europe and its extensions, we haven't needed it, so we've put it on the shelf. However, since the early days of the church we have had an abbreviated gospel which the Greeks way back in the day call the kerygma. The kerygma has a basic content that can expand and contract depending on your audience and how much time you have to make your point. If your audience isn't very attentive, or this is a first meeting, best to keep it brief. If you only have until the elevator door opens or until the meeting starts in just a minute or two, a long explanation isn't going to work. All you need to do is peek their interest and they will come back for more. As long as you do a decent job of it, God will take care of the rest. The kerygma goes something like this, and it can be expanded or taken down to brass tax as the situation warrants.

1. God made us in his image for loving relationships with him and with other human beings.
2. Sin and its consequences turned us from God and from our loving purpose, made us doubt God, and led us to all the evils that we inflict on ourselves and others.
3. God never gave up on us but sent his Son as the answer to our problem and as Savior of our broken world.
4. Part of that Answer in Jesus the Son of God is that in His death he took all our sins and the punishment that should have been ours on himself and in doing this gave us a second chance.

5. Like God's love, Jesus' actions to save us are personal. They're for each of us. We each have to make a response and claim them. We must believe, repent of our old life of sin and be baptized.
6. Baptism brings us into the life of Jesus himself. We make a life-long commitment to learn and live his ways/his teachings within the body of believer which we call the church.
7. As we advance in the life of Christ, we take on the mission to go and make disciples.

This is stated as seven bullet points. It's not all that much and it can be put into one's own words. It can be shortened. And libraries have been filled with what might be said to expand on the topics touched on in these seven points. And I didn't reinvent the wheel; I borrowed and then condensed these from an article on the internet. (Google can be a wonderful thing.)

Being able to give an accounting of your faith really isn't all that difficult. A little research and settling on a text; a bit of practice, and when the time comes, a short prayer that you may speak the kerygma well should do the trick. And that last part is most important. You are connected with the Lord God, whether you know that connection as primarily, Father, Son or Spirit. This is His work. Even if it doesn't get the results you had hoped for, God won't let his word return without accomplishing its intended purpose.

- Fr. Paul Gebhardt