Emmaus is a touching Easter story. a favorite for some. There’s a famous painting of the Emmaus encounter. Jesus is walking with the Disciples and their body language depicts engagement. The Disciples are riveted by Jesus’ Word. They are under or nearby, I believe, a beautiful willow tree. Yet in this encounter, Jesus is strange too! He disguises His presence, concealing His resurrected Body. He does this with Mary Magdalene also in the garden episode. Yet with the Apostles He appears in radiant glory? Why? Why does He sometimes conceal His Presence?

In fact, to make things weirder, Jesus is even coy. He pretends to walk ahead of the Disciples and the Scripture says “pretends!” I didn’t add lib. But then they invite Him over to stay for dinner where they recognize him in the Mass. Still at first, Jesus is coy. Is Jesus playing? In the episode of the multiplication of the loaves too, Jesus asks the Apostles how much food they have to feed the people. Yet the Scripture says He asks this to test them, for He knows the miracle He is about to perform. Does Jesus have an innocent smirk? Could He . . . have an innocent smirk?

In another part of Scripture, Jesus tells us we must be clever as snakes and simple as doves. What does this mean?

Well, it doesn’t mean to be deceptive or lie. Jesus says be innocent like doves. By clever, I think He means to be prudent or careful. There is a famous saying that sometimes we fight fire with fire. We fight the fire of hate with the Fire of Love. What about being sneaky? How do we fight sneakiness? With good sneakiness? Sounds funny but Yes! We fight subtlety with subtlety. Evil is subtly deceptive, even clandestine. Evil likes to be concealed, to hide like a spider. The Devil tantalizes like the candy-man. When we need an orange, he offers some cotton candy! Not that candy is bad in moderation-- but you get me. Evil can tantalize, dazzle us, right?

Don’t get me wrong. Jesus is bold with the Pharisees. There is a time to be bold. The Pharisees (many of them), are stubborn. Jesus knows this. Jesus is tough with the people in general at times too. Still, with great sinners He’s surprisingly lenient. Why? Well, most of the time what do they say? You can catch more flies with honey than vinegar, right? Do you want to make someone to choose Jesus? Then what? What if they decide to follow Jesus because they think they have to? Later on, they will lose the desire. Why? . . . Because they need to want it.

Jesus wants us to be able to say when we die, that “I walked the walk. I talked the talk. I danced the dance. He wants us, like a kid learning to ride a bike, to say confidently, “Look Daddy or Mommy-- I did it!” Many times, Jesus wants only to plant the seed, to kindle the spark. He wants us to fertilize the soil or stir the flame. He wants us to eventually say “Yes” with our whole being. This takes time. Unfortunately, sometimes we want people, especially loved ones, to be “saved” yesterday.

The problem is . . . we may have lost our first love. Maybe we need to discover the wonder of Jesus again? Maybe we need to fall in love once again with Incarnate Love? Only then, can we know how to tantalize-- how to dazzle-- with the Fire of Divine Love. Love is powerful and sometimes even scary! That’s why some people are afraid to fall in love. Maybe they’ve been hurt in the past? Maybe they aren’t ready for a blazing fire. Sometimes a spark is all we can handle. Remember, even a roaring inferno begins with the tiniest spark.