

Sadly, we are well acquainted with scandals within the Church. Persons of authority, clergy or lay, abuse their power and status. The common thread is advantage taken of vulnerable ones. Surprisingly, scandal stands at the heart of our reading. “Blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.” That word translated as “take offense” is *skandalizo*. Its original meaning referenced a stone or block that caused one to stumble. So, who would be scandalized by Jesus, and why?

Back then, Jesus repeatedly “scandalized” folks by his teachings. When Jesus taught in the Nazareth synagogue, the hometown crowd “took offense” (*skandalizo*). Disciples later ask Jesus: “Do you know the Pharisees ‘took offense’ (*skandalizo*) when they heard what you said?” And then, there is Peter. In Matthew 26:33, Peter tells Jesus in the Upper Room: “Though all **become deserters** because of you, I will never **desert** you.” Those bolded words? *Skandalizo*. Peter’s vow to never be scandalized by Jesus soon unwinds out of fear.

And now? Scandals in the Church need not arise because of illicit or unethical behavior. Sometimes, just telling the truth can be scandalous. Sometimes, just speaking and acting on behalf of those without voice or standing can be scandalous. Perhaps it is not mere coincidence that Jesus utters “Blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me” right after affirming “the poor have good news preached to them.” Because such scandal sounds to me like “good trouble.”

For Reflection and Action:

As you hear this text, would “taking offense” or “scandalized” carry more weight; why?

How do you connect Jesus’ “blessing” with the rest of this reading?

What teachings of Jesus (and the Church) might be considered scandalous today; why?