

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, February 10, 2019

A few years ago, *ESPN, The Magazine* ran a story entitled “The Most Dangerous Man in Football.” The man wasn’t Tom Brady or Todd Gurley...or any of the stars who played in last week’s Super Bowl. It was Chris Borland, a linebacker who had retired in March of 2015.

When he called the 49r’s to set up a press conference and announce his retirement, they responded by mailing him a bill for \$617,436...his signing bonus. In all, this decision would cost him an estimated \$2.3 million. He walked away because of the danger of concussion. Basically he said that his health was worth more than any money or fame. He loved football, but already concussed twice in games, he simply felt it was worth it. The NFL’s response? A month after his retirement, they ordered him to take a drug test (implying that his decision in some way skirted their drug policy). He could retire after his system was clean, and then request reinstatement. He took the test and passed it, but he said he really didn’t trust the NFL.

Around the time all this was happening it was reported that Ken Stabler, one of Carl’s former quarterback teammates, had indeed suffered from the brain disease, Stage 3 CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy). It can only be diagnosed for certain at death. Shortly after that, Ken was nominated for the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

I never thought I’d be using this as an illustration in a homily. Perhaps it’s good for us to remember that the weekend after the Super Bowl. Chris Borland was willing to walk away from football...a prophet that makes him very dangerous to the NFL.

All true prophets experience danger...from those who don’t like their message. We track three of them in the scripture this week. Isaiah answers the call to speak God’s word, sinner though he was. He simply says, “Here I am, send me.”

Jesus calls Peter, James and John to turn away from the fear, their sense of unworthiness to proclaim the good news. They are called to fish for people now. They left everything and followed him.

Paul adds his name to the apostles, calling himself least of the apostles. **“By the grace of God, I am what I am, and God’s grace to me has not been ineffective.**

How dangerous are we in proclaiming the good news? Are we willing to live the gospel for others to see in US the good news? Are we willing to proclaim that good news to others? We don’t know about Isaiah, but the other biblical prophets mentioned – Paul, Jesus, Peter, James and John – were all martyred. Why? They were dangerous to others...particularly the religious establishment of that era. Let us follow them in faith.