

Mystery Priest Hailed as Angel Comes Forward With Miracle Story

No, this isn't the priest who spent three seasons on network television solving crimes in the *Father Dowling Mysteries*, portrayed by actor Tom Bosley.

He's a real-life Father Dowling—Patrick, to be exact—and he's been identified as the mystery priest who was hailed as an angel after praying with and anointing a girl following a horrific automobile accident in Missouri on Aug. 4. Fr. Dowling, of the Diocese of Jefferson City, vanished from the scene without a word, prompting a witness to say that "it's a miracle" 19-year-old Katie Lentz survived the accident.

Lentz's vehicle was struck by another car that passed into her lane. The driver of the car was charged with driving while intoxicated.

It took rescue workers more than an hour to cut Lentz out of the car. The highway was blocked off, but after he identified himself as a priest, Fr. Dowling was allowed to approach Lentz's vehicle. He prayed, gave absolution and then left, according to a story in *USA Today*.

"I thank God and the amazingly competent rescue workers," Fr. Dowling told the *Catholic News Agency*. "I thank them for making me welcome in such a highly charged situation and allowing me to minister as a priest."

Fr. Dowling told the *Catholic News Agency* that Lentz asked him to pray for her leg to stop hurting.

"She asked me to pray aloud, and I did briefly. ... The rescue workers needed space and would not have appreciated

distraction,” he said. “I stepped to one side and said my rosary silently until the lady was taken from the car.”

Fr. Dowling affirmed to the *Catholic News Agency* that he performed the normal duties of a priest in such a situation, giving Lentz the anointing of the sick and absolution, but he refused to take personal credit for Lentz’s survival.

According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, absolution is that act of the priest whereby, in the sacrament of penance, he frees man from sin.

“You must remember, there were many people praying there, many, many people ... and they were all praying obviously for healing and for her safety,” Dowling said. “I was probably part of the answer to their prayers. I came by and anointed and absolved, [but] I didn’t say another word. ... I did not say anything like the machinery would begin to work or they would succeed in getting her out of the car. That did not come from my lips, though two people heard it.”

Fr. Dowling, who serves in prison ministry and serves the Spanish-speaking population of the Diocese of Jefferson City, was returning from having said mass in Ewing, Mo.