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October 18, 2007

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But, bizarrely, he also appeared to say he had been the victim of some form of deception.

It has also emerged Father Pacheco was apparently called in to see his superior, Algarve Bishop Manuel Quintas and warned about his behaviour.

In the days after Madeleine vanished on May 3, the McCanns, both 39 and devout Catholics, frequently sought refuge at the priest's church.

They became so close to Father Pacheco, he gave them the keys to the tiny building so they could go in to pray whenever they liked.

However, his friendship with the couple appeared to spectacularly backfire after police became convinced Kate had told him she had killed her daughter during confession.

But he has vowed to take whatever she had said to the grave, despite being quizzed by detectives.

Father Pacheco appeared to virtually vanish from the public eye in the weeks after Gerry and Kate were made arguidos - or official suspects.

The pair left Portugal without saying goodbye and handed the church keys to another clergyman.

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Last updated at 10:03 18 October 2007

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Last week, police moved in to search the churchyard and there has been some suggestion that they may consider digging for Madeleine's body at the location.

Father Pacheco, runs two churches and teaches at three local schools, yesterday broke his silence.

According to the Daily Express, he admitted he had become too close to the couple, still official suspects in the disappearance of their daughter.

"I was deceived," he said.

"I was just doing my job supporting lost souls. I would do that with any family who were in their situation. I didn't do anything wrong.

Father Pacheco, 46, said he had felt compelled to help Kate and Gerry because of their "inconsolable grief".

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-488262/I-deceived-says-Portuguese-priest-comforted-Gerry-Kate-McCann.html>

