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Witness Statement

(Father) Paul Seddon

Statement, April 16, 2008

I am the person referred to above and I am a Priest of the Roman Catholic Church, a position that I have held for more than 20 years. During the past 18 months I have exercised my functions as a priest in three parishes in the Manchester area and previously I spent sixteen years as a priest in Liverpool. I have known Kate and Gerry McCann for over 10 years. I met them as a couple at the wedding of my friends Mark and Linda, which I presided over at Easter 1997 in Liverpool. Kate had been invited to the ceremony as Lindas childhood friend and Gerry accompanied her. I remember that after the ceremony I got to know Kate and Gerry seriously for the first time, although I had perhaps already met Kate for short moments on previous occasions as Lindas friend. During the reception I particularly remember Gerry because of the fact that he was wearing a kilt, which gave him an extrovert air and meant that he did not go unnoticed. I also discovered that we shared an enthusiastic interest for golf and we spent a lot of time talking about this. Since then, Kate, Gerry and I became good friends and they continue to be part of the social circle today.

In 1998 I carried out Kate and Gerrys wedding ceremony, again in Liverpool. At that time I already knew Kate and Gerry quite well and had played many golf matches with Gerry. I remember that they gave me a set of golf clubs from St Andrews as a present for carrying out the ceremony. I also baptised their first child, Madeleine, but more than being a priest, I consider myself above all to be their friend.

During the last ten years our friendship has been constant and i have always kept in regular contact wherever they have been. I travelled to Amsterdam to visit them when Gerry was working there, and we see each other at least three or four times a year. I have spent other holiday periods with them including one occasion in Stratford upon Avon after the birth of the twins. During the time they were in Amsterdam I was very ill and was forced to spend six or seven weeks without working. Kate and Gerry gave me much support and phoned me regularly. I ended up becoming a very good friend of the whole family.

The first time I heard of Madeleines disappearance was in the early morning of Friday 4th May 2007.

I received a phone call from Linda who told me what had happened, and I immediately sent a text message to Kates mobile, telling her that my prayers were with them. I received a reply almost immediately and I remember Kate wrote that she felt as if the ?world was about to fall apart?.

At about 1.30 that morning Kate called me in a state of great agitation. I tried to calm her as well as I could saying that Madeleine could have had a bout of sleepwalking and that she would be all right. I remember that Kate was worried by the fact that Madeleine was wearing short sleeved pyjamas and that she could catch a cold. I felt that only a mother could think like that and say such a thing. I could perceive the trauma that Kate was experiencing from her voice. I led with prayers and other situations in my role as priest.

Gerry phoned me on the same night and he also seemed to me to be quite traumatised and at the same time very upset and angry. His Scottish accent, which was normally very slight, became so heavy that his sentences were almost incomprehensible. I spoke to them again the following morning and their state was practically the same. Gerry was worried by the fact that the Portuguese police were focussed upon him and Kate, but I tried to reassure him that that would be a normal procedure and that they were only trying to find out the maximum information possible about Madeleine. I think that Gerry already had a notion of this but felt frustrated. I asked them whether they had any kind of emotional support and they replied that Mark Warner had provided them with a professional counsellor. Later I travelled to Portugal with the aim of offering all my positive support. I arrived on the day of Madeleine's birthday, the 12th May 2007 and travelled with a mutual friend, Linda. Once I arrived, it was easy to note that they only needed having their family and friends close. I knew that there was not much that I could do for them, but just the fact of contributing to an occasional smile already seemed to be a big help. I stayed for a week on that occasion, but returned to Portugal for another week in August 2007, again to lend all possible support.

During my stay I helped conduct religious services in the Catholic Church as well as in the Anglican church in Praia da Luz.

When I returned to the UK I tried to leave it to Kate and Gerry to phone in order not to appear too interfering, given that I knew both of them to be very busy. Every time we spoke, they always asked me to pray for Madeleine. I always did this and on one occasion I organised a vigil in Formby that was attended by hundreds of people. From the beginning when Kate and Gerry told me that 'Madeleine had been taken?', however I always had hope that the child could have left (the apartment) alone as she was a very adventurous girl.

On the occasions that I saw and talked to Kate and Gerry since this happened, they reacted with stress and trauma given that what happened to them does not make sense to them and they wish to have Madeleine back instead of all the publicity and press. I have had some difficulties in carrying out my daily tasks because it seems surreal to me that life continues normally while Kate and Gerry are going through this situation.

They are both very different. Kate is a reserved person and finds all this exposure and speaking in public very difficult. I think that she has been extraordinary, mainly in doing things like speaking to the European Parliament recently. Gerry is more extrovert and finds it easier to relate to people. My reading of all this is that both have worked very well as a team and that have been successful in the impact that the campaign to find Madeleine has had. I think that they have acted very well in order to maintain their dignity, in the face of more negative publicity and I know that their friends are very proud of them.

I would also like to emphasise that it worries me that Kate and Gerry continue to be considered as arguidos in the case. The fact that it was suggested that they might have something to do with Madeleine's disappearance is implausible and in bad taste. This made some members of the press turn against them, resulting in negative publicity. They are just two normal people who want their daughter to return to be with them and are doing everything within their reach to find her. If they thought she was dead they would not continue to search for her. They continue to be focussed upon searching for and finding Madeleine and hope that she will be found.

On Wednesday, 16th April 2008 I was interviewed on DVD between 10.05 and 10.47 by DC 4064 Holliday. I am willing to confirm that my statement is truthful and in accordance with my understanding and belief and that it faithfully reflects what I witnessed. This statement was made by me and is truthful in accordance with my knowledge.