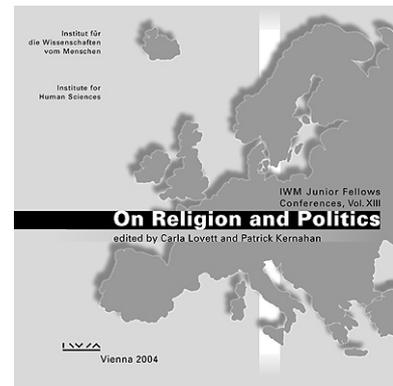


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“Six Days You Shall Labor”: Priest and Parish in Working Class Vienna, 1875-1914

Carla Lovett

Introduction

The glorious *fin-de-siècle* days of the Habsburg Monarchy were never more in evidence than in the magnificent capital of Vienna during the late 19th century. The well-chronicled *Ringstrasse* world of Johann Strauss, Sigmund Freud, Gustav Klimt, and Otto Wagner provided a fairy tale existence for Austria’s aristocracy and upper middle classes.¹ However, in Vienna’s poorer districts, members of the industrial working class were living a nightmare.²

¹ Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: politics and culture*. (New York, 1980). Schorske provides a fine overview of the vibrant intellectual culture that permeated Viennese upper and middle class life in the late nineteenth century.

² Brigitte Hamann’s *Hitler’s Vienna: A Dictator’s Apprenticeship*. Translated by Thomas Thornton. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) furnishes the balance to Schorske’s portrayal

As increasing numbers of industrial workers from the various provinces flowed into the capital city of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Catholic Church attempted to alleviate the suffering. However, in the midst of such misery, the church struggled with an effective pastoral strategy. The rapid pace of Austrian industrialization and urbanization severely taxed a church hierarchy with already limited resources available, and distressing religious conditions resulted from the church's inability to provide adequately for its burgeoning flock. This deplorable situation was nowhere more obvious than in Vienna's Tenth District of Favoriten and its St. John the Evangelist parish.

The overall causes and consequences of the Catholic Church's apparent unpreparedness in Vienna have remained largely unstudied. However, an initial examination of the social and political contexts of the Church *vis à vis* its parishioners in Favoriten sheds light on two contributing factors to what ultimately became a desperate position for Viennese Catholicism by World War I. An extremely high priest-to-parishioner ratio, combined with demanding vocational responsibilities, left parish priests little time to tend to their flock, let alone become good shepherds of it. For the parish of St. John the Evangelist the short term negative impact of this situation was most visible in those community-based religious practices involving the sacraments of confession and communion, and the all-important rites of passage surrounding birth, marriage, and death. In addition, all initial evidence in this particular case suggests the long term consequences were nothing short of widespread secularization on the part of Vienna's working class residents.

The Secularization Debate

Admittedly, the term "secularization" is a loaded one currently as a lively debate has erupted around both the precise meaning of the word and whether it even has merit in a broader discussion on the social history of religion in modern Europe.

In the 1960s and '70s an earlier generation of sociologists and historians including Peter Berger, Alan Gilbert, Roy Wallace and Steve Bruce had proclaimed confidently the inevitable and irreversible decline of the social significance of religion.³

of Vienna by specifically focusing on the socio-economic conditions of the city's working class at the time.

³ For further details consult Peter Berger's *Sacred canopy: The social reality of religion* (London, 1969), Alan Gilbert's *The making of post-Christian Britain: a history of the secularization of modern society*. (London, 1980), and Roy Wallace and Steve Bruce in *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*. (Oxford, 1992).

Seeing an intimate relationship between urbanization and secularization, their “orthodox” model of secularization cited discouraging reports like that of E.R. Wickham, director of the Church of England’s Sheffield Industrial Mission, who wrote retrospectively in the 1950s, “the weakness and collapse of the churches in the urbanized and industrialized areas of the country should be transparently clear to any who are not willfully blind.”⁴

Historian William Callahan, when writing on the activity of the church from 1850-1930 in Spain, bluntly entitled his study “An Organizational and Pastoral Failure.”⁵ Likewise, the title of Alan Gilbert’s 1980 work, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain: A History of the Secularization of Modern Society* stated clearly his thoughts on the subject. The Dutch Marxist Jan Romein, when covering the religious history of the period, described the “bankruptcy of Christianity” which he suggested was greeted with satisfaction by some, horror by others, but denied by few; for, as Romein said, “religion had lost its hold over the European mind.”⁶

Even Hugh McLeod, arguably the leading historian in the field today (and, incidentally, a sort of lukewarm Quaker Socialist), had suggested that at the very least the “church failed to keep pace with urban growth.”⁷ Needless to say, to this first generation of historians to look at the social history of religion, the picture was grim.

From these and other studies, these historians concluded that rapid urban growth, the changing economic character of the cities, increasingly severe class conflict, political anticlericalism, and Enlightenment values had all worked against a church unable to keep pace with the modernization process. These same scholars also issued a dismal prognosis for the future relevance of religion in modern society, suggesting that European urban centers of the future would become veritable religious deserts.

⁴ E.R. Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City*. (London, 1957), p.11.

⁵ William Callahan, “An Organizational and Pastoral Failure: Urbanization, industrialization and religion in Spain, 1850-1930” in *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities, 1830-1930*. Hugh McLeod, editor. (London: Routledge, 1995), p.43.

⁶ Jan Romein, *The Watershed of Two Eras: Europe in 1900*. Translated by Arnold J. Pomerans. (Middletown, Conn, 1978), p.479.

⁷ McLeod, *European Religion*, p.3. McLeod writes extensively on the evidence for secularization in late nineteenth century European society, and most notably in *Secularization in Western Europe, 1848-1914* (New York, 2000); *Religion and the People of Western Europe 1789-1989* (Oxford, 1997); and *Piety and Poverty: Working-Class Religion in Berlin, London and New York 1870-1914* (New York, 1996).

More recent work (within the past 15 years or so), and some of it by previous adherents of the orthodox model, has begun to question a number of the overall conclusions put forth by the earlier group. Hugh McLeod, David Hempton, Callum Brown, the irrepressible Peter Berger and others have begun to question the inevitability of secularization and to re-examine some of the broad generalizations that were postulated regarding the apparent wholesale decline of the church as a viable social institution in modern Europe.⁸ The "revisionists" claim that a more nuanced perspective reveals a picture that includes both the failures and achievements of the role of religion in modern society. Maintaining that the "orthodox" perspective was really never proved but only assumed, they suggest that better understanding of the many complex variables involved as well as more documentation would yield quite different results.

As support for this second view, historian Carl Strikwerda found Catholicism in Belgian cities during the 19th century to be a "resurgent religion" and applauded its "striking ability to withstand some of the tide against religion."⁹ Likewise, Clyde Binfield, who also looked at Sheffield, England directly refuted Wickham's earlier gloomy view of the town. Binfield argued instead that religion in the town reflected "nuances of spirituality and liturgical response" which defied generalization, and that there was an immense variety of types of religion which required microscopic study.¹⁰

Using completed studies of cities such as Berlin, London, Paris, New York, and Belfast, and a plethora of analyses of smaller English and continental towns, these scholars pointed to significant differences in the individual routes to supposed "secularization" taken by European urban centers. Church-state alliances could promote the peaceful longevity of organized religion (Anglicanism in London), its rapid demise (Lutheranism in Berlin), or socio-religious conflict yet to be solved (Protestantism and Catholicism in Belfast). Immigration and resettlement patterns might break ties with traditional cultures and religions (Paris) or strengthen them

⁸ New work in the field include David Hempton's *Religion and political culture in Britain and Ireland: from the glorious revolution to the decline of empire* (Cambridge, 1996); Callum Brown's "A Revisionist Approach to Religious Change," in *Religion and Modernization* (Oxford, 1992), pp.31-58; or Peter Berger's *The desecularization of the world: resurgent religion and world politics* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1999).

⁹ Carl Strikwerda, "A Resurgent Religion: The Rise of Catholic Social Movements in Nineteenth Century Belgian Cities" in *European Religion*, p.61.

¹⁰ Clyde Binfield, "A Crucible of Modest Though Concentrated Experiment': Religion in Sheffield, c.1840-1950" in *European Religion*, p. 196.

(New York). The religiosity, or lack thereof, of the middle class was singularly important in determining the future of the role of organized religion, either bolstering it (London) or thwarting it (Berlin). And prevailing working class socio-economic philosophies (for example, social democracy in Berlin or the capitalist ethos of New York) impacted popular opinion concerning the role of religion ('opiate of the people' vs. an indication of divine providence).

An initially small, but now rapidly growing group of scholars are moving beyond, or better yet, stepping away from, these traditionally 'orthodox' and 'revisionist' perspectives on secularization to rethink instead the whole definition of 'religion'. Sarah Williams, Thomas Kselman, Francis Lannon, and others contend that "to use declining Catholic [or Protestant] practice as evidence of a decline in religion"¹¹ privileges far too much orthodox Christianity at the expense of non-Christian forms of religion.

Following in the footsteps of French sociologist Emile Durkheim, these historians argue for a broader understanding of religious institutions, symbols, and beliefs, maintaining that this is essential to getting right the role of religion in 19th century Europe. They specifically point to alternative forms of religious practice, which Sarah Williams claims are all but ignored by the orthodox model, but are increasingly evident in the late 1800s – popular religions such as mysticism, spiritualism, or the occult, or civic (patriotism) or secular (socialism) 'religions'. Williams' own work in Southwark, a working class district in London specifically revealed the important presence of these so-called "superstitions".¹²

Likewise, Jeffrey Cox in his *English Churches in a Secular Society* which discussed the religious beliefs of south Londoners claimed the orthodox secularization thesis was too simply put to address the religious attitudes of non-regular church-goers who observed some rites of passage, maintained some belief in Christian doctrine, and were committed to Christian ethics as they understood them.¹³ These and other studies attempted to provide evidence that Europe was in no danger of secularizing and that the social significance of religion was perhaps even on the rise. The

¹¹ Thomas Kselman, "The Varieties of Religious Experience in Urban France" in *European Religion*, p.166. Also see Thomas Kselman *Death and the Afterlife in Nineteenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1992) and *Miracles and Prophecies in Nineteenth-Century France* (Rutgers, 1983); Sarah Williams' *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c. 1880-1939* (Oxford, 1999); and Francis Lannon, *Privilege, Persecution and Prophecy: The Catholic Church in Spain, 1875-1975* (Oxford, 1987).

¹² Williams, *Religious Belief*.

¹³ Jeffrey Cox, *English Churches in a Secular Society*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

final conclusions drawn by these scholars were that the decline of religion in the face of urbanization and secularization was not necessarily inevitable and that one must look at “the energy and inventiveness with which many clergy were responding to the urban situation.”¹⁴

Needless to say, these differing interpretations of the processes of secularization have left social historians of religion standing on very shaky ground with great doubts about the validity of any of the above theories of secularization, including, most importantly, the very definition of secularization itself. At the moment, all are agreed on only one thing – that there is “no consensus [currently] as to what can be described as secularization.”¹⁵

Most historians and sociologists have moved to a safer “high ground”, so to speak, regarding secularization. They won’t necessarily deny that “from an overall viewpoint church and religious life in the nineteenth century was exposed to a secularization process.”¹⁶ However, these same scholars are quick to add that “religion and the church, the world and society are...only to be evaluated within a specific contemporary theological and social context” and, consideration must be given to “where contemporaries themselves drew the frontier between ‘religious’ and ‘secular’, between ‘church’ and ‘world’.”¹⁷

Irregardless of the state of the debate surrounding the theory of secularization, there is no doubting the existence of commonly recognized secularizing forces in the districts of late 19th century working class Vienna. However, at the same time, it is important to emphasize that this end result was in no way predetermined or inevitable, although the situation would in fact come to be irreversible.

Vienna’s Favoriten

The district of Favoriten began humbly enough although it never lacked for attention. The Romans visited first, constructing a fortress within what would become the boundaries of Favoriten at Hohenmarkt. In 1683 four camps of Turks were stopped in their tracks by the heroic Poles (who subsequently, and proudly, laid claim to having saved the Christian West from these Eastern infidels). In 1805 Napoleon dropped by during his first of two unwelcome visits to the Habsburg impe-

¹⁴ McLeod, *European Religion*, p.20.

¹⁵ Lucien Hölscher, “Secularization and Urbanization in the Nineteenth Century” in *European Religion*, p.266.

¹⁶ Hölscher, p.267.

¹⁷ Hölscher, p.266-7.

rial capital. And during the famous revolutions of 1848, Favoriten provided the monarchy's loyalist leader Alfred Windischgrätz who sufficiently, if brutally, quelled the riots brought on by the problems in Paris. (This was one of many episodes during the course of the 19th century which proved right the adage of Austria's Prince Klemens von Metternich, "if Paris sneezes, Europe catches a cold.")

The turning point with regards to industrial and commercial growth for Austria came with the building of railroad lines that served to connect the northern and southern provinces of the empire and to link Vienna with Italy and the Adriatic with Hungary.¹⁸ The railroad arrived in Favoriten in 1849 with the construction of the Sudbahnhof, one of Vienna's four major railroad terminals. The imperial Arsenal and a military training ground for young army cadets in 1849 completed state construction in Favoriten but the next fifty years would produce a building boom in Favoriten that was unprecedented in all of Vienna.

New industries grew rapidly in the tenth district during the last half of the 19th century.¹⁹ Whereas textile production was by far the largest and most important industry in the first half of the century, the manufacturing of chemicals, metal wares, wood products, paper, and various luxury goods predominated in Favoriten. These included the famous Viennese manufacturing conglomerates of Hunter & Schrantz (1884), Brown & Boven (1899), Schmidt & Co. (1900), and the Anker Bread Factory (1899) which very deliberately chose as its location the top of the highest point in the district so its horse-drawn wagons laden with bread could more easily descend the hill each morning on their way into the center of town, leaving them with an empty load when they faced the uphill climb on their afternoon return. Favoriten was also famous throughout Europe for its brick factories (the *Wienerberger Ziegelöfen*) which saw tremendous expansion during this period. By 1912, the brickworks were producing 200 million bricks a year, enough for 1000 three story houses, and providing visible evidence of the strong building boom throughout all of Vienna.

Rapid population growth mirrored industrial expansion as workers moved into the area. In 1850, Favoriten was composed of five houses and a "small village of Slavs." In 1862 the area boasted one hundred homes, 5,000 inhabitants and a new school. By 1874, when Favoriten became Vienna's tenth district, the population had reached 25,800, and by 1900 Favoriten had become Vienna's largest industrial and working center with factories, railroads, and a population of over 120,000.

¹⁸ Arthur May, *The Hapsburg Monarchy, 1867-1914*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p.65.

¹⁹ In fact, between 1880 and 1910, the number of factories in the suburbs increased by 133%.

Even larger than its more famous counterpart, Vienna’s sixteenth district of Ottakring, Favoriten by itself would have been the third largest town in Austria.²⁰ Although a majority of the residents were German, the presence of a large (25%) Czech minority guaranteed that life would be contentious.

This exponential growth in population was not unique to Favoriten. Vienna, and indeed other European capitals were experiencing similarly drastic gains as urbanization followed industrialization on the way to modernization (Table 1). In addition, this rapid pace of urban growth brought on chronic housing shortages for the poor and increased land speculation for the wealthy. In Vienna this meant space was expensive to rent and raised the city’s cost of living to among the highest in Europe. Between 1880 and 1910 land prices in Stephansplatz in the center of Vienna’s first district doubled from 100 to over 200 kronen/ft². During the same period, prices in the suburbs increased 2,650% while in the three year period 1910-1913, Vienna’s rent index soared from 87.5 to 101.8 points.²¹

Table 1. 19th Century Population Statistics

<i>Year</i>	<i>Vienna</i>	<i>District X – Favoriten total</i>	<i># Catholics</i>	<i>London[‡]</i>	<i>Paris[‡]</i>	<i>Berlin[‡]</i>
1800	231,949	–	–	900,000	600,000	170,000
1850	426,415	–	–			450,000
1870	855,439 [‡]	5,500*	–			900,000
1880	1,115,798	52,136	45,000	3,816,000	2,270,000	1,120,000
1890	1,377,271	84,813	70,009	4,350,000	2,450,000	1,900,000
1900	1,702,079	127,626	110,000	6,500,000	3,600,000	2,700,000
1910	2,004,939	152,387	124,000 ^{‡‡}			3,500,000

* became District X in 1874; [‡] rounded estimates from closest census;

^{‡‡} estimate taken from doubling St. John the Evangelist number to include St. Anton parish.

Added to the grievance of high rental prices were deplorable living conditions. Cheaply built housing for the working class masses included large brick or stone structures, four to six stories in height and meant to furnish housing for a dozen or

²⁰ Today, the district still has the largest population in Vienna – and still working class, although with a new immigrant population, mainly from Turkey, Albania, and the war-torn Balkan states.

²¹ Hamann, pg. 138.

so families. In others, two room *Bassena* flats with no running water and bathrooms in the hallways, provided housing for as many as ten people (including parents, children, and boarders). One in seven apartments lacked kitchen facilities. Habsburg historian Arthur May included an official report of "one sordid tenement [in which] sixty-three persons were crowded into three rooms, while 104 lived in six rooms; an investigator discovered thirteen workers of both sexes 'in the garret of a small house, twelve paces long and eight paces wide; an old man had his quarters in a remote corner, among the rubbish, for which he paid 1.20 florins (about 48 cents) a week.'"²²

By 1910 73% of all Viennese lived in such accommodations while an additional 5% of Viennese were *Bettgeber*, or bed-renters, unable to afford an apartment that could cost up to 50% of a worker's wages. Of these 80% were Czech maids or single men who had immigrated from Bohemia or Moravia in search of better opportunities in the imperial capital. To alleviate this situation of extreme overcrowding, Vienna's town government pushed tax exemptions for up to thirty years to encourage the construction of residential structures. However, even these and other concessions failed to keep pace with the ever-growing population. In fact, after 1900 Karl Lueger, Vienna's Christian Social mayor, made available low rent municipal housing only to his lower middle class Christian Social Party constituents with none accessible to the predominantly Socialist working class poor.²³

Needless to say, such crowded and ill-equipped housing resulted in high illness and mortality rates. By 1899, Favoriten had the third highest death rate in Vienna with an average of 16.4 out of every 10,000 succumbing to disease yearly. Tuberculosis, commonly known in Europe as "Vienna's Disease" was the most common culprit although other epidemics, such as the 1910 cholera outbreak, frequently ravaged the lower class districts. On top of this, there was no medical or accident insurance in Vienna until the late 1880s.

Working conditions were no better. Even after Victor Adler, a well-to-do physician and founder of the Social Democratic Party in Vienna, secretly documented the dire conditions of the brick factories and then published his observations in 1888 few changes took place. The general understanding on the part of factory owners was that it was easier to find a new worker than improve unhealthy working conditions. 14 hour work days, no Sundays off, and no vacation time were the norm. Wages were meager at best, and in some cases Favoriten's brick factories

²² May, p.308.

²³ Hamann, pg. 139.

chose to pay salaries with a metal "currency" which could only be used to purchase goods at exorbitant rates from the factory store.

A prevailing sense of hopelessness (Vienna's suicide rate was, and is, the highest in Europe) and frustration among Vienna's working class was exacerbated by the inability to vote until 1907. On top of this, many felt the Catholic Church either had no understanding of, or no desire to improve, their social and economic plight. Imperial and religious authorities had maintained close ties historically, even after the Josephinian reforms at the end of the eighteenth century, which left the motivations of Catholic authorities as somewhat suspect in the eyes of the poor. Add to this legacy sermons generally consisting of well-meant exhortations to endure patiently the miseries of daily life with the understanding that future rewards waited in Heaven, and one senses a church less than sensitive to the increasingly difficulties of every day life in Vienna's slums.²⁴

Some members of the working class responded by quietly distancing themselves from the Catholic Church which, given the frenetic and distracted nature of parish ministry at the time, was not hard to do. Others became increasingly radical and militantly anti-clerical in their political leanings, even lashing out against the church. In 1883 Socialist agitators disrupted special services at St. John the Evangelist church, causing a riot large enough to make the city papers. In 1896 disgruntled anti-clericalism manifested itself in a lawsuit brought on by workers accusing priests from the same parish of charging inflated fees to perform weddings, funerals, and other religious rites of passage still important for their social implications if no longer for religious ones. In 1904 negative working class sentiment towards the Catholic Church joined forces with Georg Schönerer's middle class Pan-German Association to organize the mass church resignation movement *Los von Rome*. While none of the results of this specific escapade were long lasting, the Catholic Church could not help but notice that antipathy towards the church as an institution came from more than a few isolated and dissatisfied lower class workers.²⁵

By the end of the nineteenth century Austria's Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) would do a much better job of harnessing the frustrations and hostilities of Vienna's working class than the Catholic Church would of alleviating them. Because of wide

²⁴ See, for instance, Johann Schattauer's, *Geschichte der Pfarre St. Johann der Evangelist, Wien X, 1876-1982*. Arbeitskreis für Kirchliche Zeit-und Wiener Diözesangeschichte. (Unpublished, Vienna, 1984), or German Socialist accounts of similar disinterest on the part of the Protestant Church in Alfred Kelly's, *The German Worker: working class autobiographies from the age of industrialization*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

²⁵ John Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897-1918*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.171.

acclaim for his earlier work documenting the horrible working conditions, Dr. Victor Adler was picked as one of the leaders of the fledgling organization when it first officially organized in Favoriten in December 1888. By 1891 the SPÖ had become legalized in Niederösterreich Landtag and in 1897, when the party was first included in the elections for the Reichsrat, the SPÖ received 47% of the Favoriten vote. This was an entire decade before the 1907 introduction of universal manhood suffrage in which Favoriten voted 60% for the SPÖ. Very quickly, Favoriten became the center of the Social Democratic movement in Vienna, supplying a number of its leaders and a significant amount of its membership and support.²⁶

One early 20th century historian, Heinrich Swoboda, in his epic 1907 work, *Großstadseelsorger*, cited the work of a Viennese priest, Franz Unterhofer, who had undertaken an analysis of the 1907 elections in Vienna. Unterhofer drew an explicit link between the size of individual parishes in Vienna and the influence wielded by the Social Democratic Party in those parishes. For instance, Unterhofer reported that in Favoriten, 14,114 votes out of a total 23, 537 went to the Social Democratic Party in 1907 at a time when the district had its population of over 140,000 divided into two of the largest parishes in Vienna.²⁷ With such large numbers and so few resources, parish priests in Favoriten hardly knew their parishioners, let alone had any strong influence over them. Unfortunately, this defection of Catholic members of the working class to the SPÖ was only one of the consequences for a Church ill-equipped to face both the rapid pace of change and the complexity of challenges presented it by the end of the 19th century.

St. John the Evangelist Parish

Despite the overwhelming odds the Catholic Church in Vienna still attempted to devise a strategy for Favoriten to better handle the powerful forces of urbanization and industrialization and to confront the appalling social and economic conditions that resulted from them. Unfortunately, the resources allocated it by the now ambivalent monarchy under an aging Franz Josef and by Vienna's generally liberal (and anti-clerical) political leadership in no way compensated for the impossible task the Church faced beginning in 1876 in District Ten.

²⁶ Helfried Seemann and Christian Lunzer, editors, *Favoriten Album: 1880-1930*. (Vienna: REMAprint, 1999).

²⁷ Franz Unterhofer, *Streiflicht auf die Kirchennot im volkreichsten Bezirke Wiens* (Vienna, 1907) as quoted in Heinrich Swoboda. *Großstadt-Seelsorge: ein pastoraltheologische Studie*. (Regensburg: Druck und Verlag, von Friedrich Pustet, 1909).

The parish of St. John the Evangelist was created in 1876 out of St. Elizabeth's Parish, itself newly created in 1866 but already outgrowing available resources. The new parish church, first approved in 1872, was built quickly and cheaply, and consecrated on October 8, 1876 with 63 year old Ignaz Fürst (1813-1894) as its first priest. Fürst's selection by the Bishop's Council to head the new parish was not altogether surprising, although the last 22 years of his ministry had been spent in small, rural villages. After all, Fürst was born in Bohemia and spoke Czech, an important skill in the multi-ethnic, polyglot imperial capital of Vienna. In addition, Fürst was somewhat familiar to local residents because of his short stint (1846-49) as minister for the Court of Vienna, where he had been responsible for accompanying death row inmates to the gallows situated in Favoriten.²⁸

Now, in the fall of 1876, Fürst faced the extremely challenging tasks of establishing a new parish with no structure, traditions, or support base and developing an effective ministry strategy with the added difficulty of having a multi-ethnic parish and very few resources available to him. In 1877 Fürst was given three *kooperatur*, or “helping priests” as assistants. He received a fourth one in 1880 and a fifth in 1892. This gave St. John the Evangelist, with its population already over 84,000 by 1890, a total of only six priests and the parish would receive no more until World War II. The disastrously high priest-to-parishioner ratios that would result from this situation would ultimately be a main reason for the less than adequate parish ministry these priests would provide.

The many vocational responsibilities of these priests were ordinary enough – lead regular services and masses, hear confessions, perform baptisms, weddings, and funerals, visit the sick, provide religious instruction in the public schools, and maintain the parish records for the City of Vienna. It was the sheer volume, however, of these responsibilities as a result of the large parish size that heavily overburdened the priests. (The simple keeping of statistics, a responsibility assigned church parishes by the state as a part of the church reforms of the 1790's, by itself was extremely time-consuming, requiring the filling out of forms literally in triplicate in an age before carbon copies.)

In addition, the list above in no way details the much more intangible but equally important aspect of these priests' responsibilities – the reconnecting of uprooted, immigrant Catholics back to the Church. Much of the population of Favor-

²⁸ Johann Schattauer, *Geschichte der Pfarre St. Johann der Evangelist, Wien X, 1876-1982*. Arbeitskreis für Kirchliche Zeit-und Wiener Diözesangeschichte. (Unpublished, Vienna, 1984), p.22.

iten were first generation transplants from rural areas throughout Cisleithania²⁹ where the Catholic Church, through the local priest, was an integral part of village life and often the custodian of its rhythms and rituals. Therefore, the culture shock these immigrants experienced upon moving to the imperial capital had more to it than the obvious social or economic dimensions. Life patterns, and ones which until then had some sort of Church influence at their core, had been disrupted and needed recreating. Unfortunately, in the chaos and turmoil of rapid pace urban life (including high mobility and Sunday work), tying immigrants into a new Catholic parish with an unfamiliar priest was hard to do. The Church throughout Catholic Europe in general, and the archdiocese of Vienna in particular, was aware of this dilemma and attempted to address it through, among other things, the lowering of priest-to-parishioner ratios to appropriate levels to give priests more relational time with individual parish members. As will be seen, however, this did not occur in St. John the Evangelist parish and the results were regrettable if predictable.

If ministry was not difficult enough, the clergy experienced opposition from anti-clerical district leaders whose nationalist sensibilities were particularly offended by the parish's attempts to minister to the Czech workers. (Besides the four masses conducted during the week and the full Sunday schedule, St. John the Evangelist provided an extra, technically illegal, Czech sermon on Sunday afternoons after the German mass.) District council members, already afraid the high number of Czechs living in Favoriten would produce a bilingual district, desired no encouragement from the Church in that direction. In 1890 Favoriten's Czech residents made up 15.7% of the population. By 1900, just three years after Prime Minister Casimir Count Badeni's 1897 language law uproar, Favoriten's population was 25.5% Czech. District leaders complained in 1888 to the Vienna City Council but the archdiocesan Ordinariat (clergy council) responded by loyally defending Fürst, despite these and other calls by both liberal and radical opposition members for his removal.³⁰

St. John the Evangelist needed much courage and creativity if it was to succeed under such oppressive circumstances. While Fürst had the courage, he lacked the necessary creativity and resources required to combat successfully the overwhelming poverty and explosive population growth as experienced in Favoriten. Unfortunately, this combination of dire circumstances and rapid change made it extremely

²⁹ Cisleithania refers to the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the *Ausgleich* of 1867. Transleithania refers to Hungary, with the Leith, a Danube tributary, forming the border between the two.

³⁰ Schattauer, p.32.

difficult to put into place an effective response with regards to practical ministry. Upon his death at the age of 81 in October 1894 Fürst was remembered warmly by both peers and parishioners not only for his 50 years of ministry, but also as a kind-hearted and modest churchman who genuinely cared for his parish.³¹

While this tribute appears innocent enough, the implications for social historians of religion are significant. Traditional interpretations regarding ecclesiastical attitudes towards the poor at the end of the nineteenth century have suggested insensitivity, indifference, and even a total disregard by church authorities for the plight of the increasingly secular working class. In Favoriten, however, an important nuance is perceived that must not be overlooked. Parish priests worked strenuously, and in ways that were recognizable and appreciated by their more faithful congregants, to provide adequate religious care for their flock. Unfortunately, even the priests' most desperate efforts were not enough to stem the rising tide of secularism, as evidenced by the apathy of much of the district and the animosity of its leaders.

The archdiocese found a successor to St. John the Evangelist's first priest in March 1895 in Eduard Karabaczek (1842-1906), a 53 year old Bohemian-born priest (although he spoke little Czech) who had served for 30 years in the rural suburbs surrounding Vienna. His main goal was a noble one – to build on the parish ministry as begun by Fürst – but this remained a losing proposition. By 1900 the burgeoning parish had a population of over 125,000 and the simple conducting of normal church ministry on the part of parish priests was impossible. Parish records show that in 1900 3942 baptisms, and 1156 marriages were conducted, as well as numerous funerals.³² In fact, a fiaker was permanently retained in front of the parish parsonage to transport priests quickly to deathbeds throughout the parish to administer last rites.³³

Besides directing parish affairs, Karabaczek coordinated the religious activities of the various private religious orders and charity groups which had established missions to the poor in the parish over the past decade or so.³⁴ Karabaczek also needed to oversee the religious instruction in the 17 public and 99 private schools in Favor-

³¹ Schattauer, p.34.

³² Statistics compiled personally from St. John the Evangelist's *Geburts-und-Tauf Register, 1900* (baptisms) and *Trauungs-Register, 1900* (weddings), July 2001.

³³ Schattauer, p. 42.

³⁴ As an example, the Jesuits' German People's Mission, the Redemptorists, the Sisters of the Holy Cross, the Women's Charity Society, and the Living Rosary Society were among those involved in religious work in St. John the Evangelist parish at the end of the nineteenth century.

iten, order serious repairs (already desperately needed) to the parish church, and continue doing battle with the liberal, anti-clerical district leadership bent on ending the parish's ministry to Favoriten's Czech Catholics. Needless to say, with all of these responsibilities burdening Karabaczek and his assistants, the intensive person-to-person ministry advocated by the Church and desired by the laity was impossible to achieve in Favoriten at the turn of the century. In addition, the superhuman efforts required of Favoriten's priests simply to maintain minimal religious contact with their constituency took its toll as overworked priests became sick and thus added to the burden of those still able to minister. Karabaczek himself became seriously ill in 1905 and was put on sick leave until his death of a stroke in August 1906, essentially leaving the parish without a full priest.³⁵

The archdiocese was not totally unaware of the situation in Favoriten and in November 1901 consecrated St. Anton's Church as the center of a second parish for the district. While this alleviated some of the burden of ministry and administration, both parishes still were larger than Vienna's average with 58,300 Catholics now belonging to St. Anton, and 57,000 Catholics remaining in St. John the Evangelist. This compared quite unfavorably with, for instance, the wealthy *Votivkirche* parish in the first district where 13,000 Catholics were served by four priests.³⁶

With the installation of St. John the Evangelist's third priest, Father Karl Watzger, in December 1906 until the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 a new and positive attitude permeated parish headquarters. The archdiocesan council had intentionally sought a younger, more energetic person for the position because of the large size of the parish and the fact that it was in such disarray following the long illness of Karabaczek. At 53 years of age, Watzger already had ministry experience in Vienna (with much acclaim from the youth in the third district), and had shown great success with each of his prior responsibilities. In St. John the Evangelist, Watzger quickly brought order to the parish's administrative and financial records, provided encouragement and a positive working environment for the various other church organizations in Favoriten, and oversaw the completion of extensive renovations to both the interior and exterior of the parish church itself. Watzger also attempted to tackle the problem of too little physical worship space for his constituency. In 1913 he built a church for the St. Philomena cloister and in 1914 established a temporary church for a new congregation in a hall far from both St. John the Evangelist and St. Anton churches. Unfortunately, Watzger's attempts to

³⁵ Schattauer, p.48.

³⁶ *Personal-Stand der Säcular-und Regular-Geistlichkeit der Wiener Erzdiöcese, 1901.* (Vienna: Wiener Erzdiöcesanarchiv).

build them a permanent church were thwarted until after the war. The war itself was welcomed in Favoriten as it was in much of the rest of Europe – seen as the long-awaited solution for all societal ills. After the first heady days and the beginnings of bad news, however, Vienna’s optimism quickly disappeared. In its wake was left increased responsibilities on the part of parish priests to visit wounded soldiers, conduct additional funerals, and provide solace to grieving families.³⁷

The parish chronicler Johann Schattauer notes that there were few, if any, complaints on the part of the district leadership during Watzger’s tenure as parish priest. While this seems like a particularly encouraging turn of affairs, suggesting perhaps that an amicable accommodation had been reached between the SPÖ and the Catholic Church in Favoriten regarding the separate-but-equal roles of each, it is much more likely that the Catholic Church simply had ceased to be a competitor for the SPÖ after the turn of the century. After all, it was Favoriten that gave the SPÖ its strongest support in the 1907 elections and where the Socialist Party retained its headquarters. A more plausible understanding of the situation is that St. John the Evangelist indeed became a more vibrant and dynamic parish center under Watzger’s watch but that fewer Favoriten residents noticed or cared. The Church’s attitude had not changed with regards to its desire to minister appropriately to all parish members, but despite its best efforts the number of registered Catholics in Favoriten (relative to the overall population) continued to diminish yearly (Table 1).³⁸

This desperate position in which Viennese Catholicism found itself in Favoriten and other working class districts on the eve of World War I generally can be attributed to the lack of an effective pastoral strategy in the face of rapid industrialization and urbanization at the end of the nineteenth century. While the particular socio-economic and religious contexts for St. John the Evangelist parish have been outlined above, it is important to take a closer look at those factors which contributed most to the decline of the Church’s religious and social significance in the twentieth century. An initial examination of this parish suggests that an extremely high priest-to-parishioner ratio and demanding vocational responsibilities involving confession, communion, and rites of passage all played a part in the long term secularization of one of Europe’s greatest cities.

³⁷ Schattauer, p.55.

³⁸ *Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Stadt Wien*. (Vienna, Bibliothek Nationale, various years).

Priest-to-Parishioner Ratios

Historically, the Catholic Church had "formed one of the more solid pillars of the Habsburg state, a strong unifying institution" within the multi-ethnic, polyglot lands of the Austro-Hungarian empire.³⁹ This traditional alliance of throne and altar had been forged first during the Counter-Reformation when both battled a common enemy in Protestantism. The monarchy first recognized the Church's ability "to bind together otherwise divided citizens" at that time and thereafter attempted to use that power to its advantage. In the 1780's and under the influence of Enlightenment ideals, Emperor Joseph II implemented an "aggressive program of reform" to, among other things, "restructure the relationship between the Catholic church, Austrian society, and parish priests."⁴⁰ Of the many reforms enacted over the next decade, the more important included: the realignment of diocesan boundaries to conform more closely with governmental jurisdictions, the founding of new parishes to integrate Austrians more fully into Catholic religious life, the creation of a religious fund to pay the salaries of the priests of these new parishes, the reduction of Catholic feast days, and the abolition of confraternities. This meant that the Austrian clergy no longer served simply as spiritual counselors but now as "moral educators and political servants of the state." In essence, then, these reforms were meant to "produce loyal priests who could watch over and hopefully guide obedient, yet productive, subjects."⁴¹

American historian William Bowman, who has written a recent evaluation of this reorganization of the Church, suggested that, "inspiring the many ecclesiastical reforms of Joseph II was the hope that Catholic priests in Vienna and elsewhere could be brought closer to their parishioners. The flip side of the government's closing of almost 400 monasteries was its establishment of new parishes. The goal of these measures was to create a network of parishes, none of which would have population in excess of 700 parishioners."⁴² Unfortunately, as Viennese Archdiocese historian Johann Weissensteiner points out, this "network of parishes" was never created. While in a flurry of activity during his reign Joseph II established 40 new parishes within Vienna and its surrounding suburbs, after his death in 1790 only 87 more parishes were created, and of these only 18 were formed before 1932 (Table 2). As

³⁹ May, p.186.

⁴⁰ William David Bowman, *Priest and Parish in Vienna, 1780-1880*. (Boston: Humanities Press, Inc., 1999), p.1.

⁴¹ Bowman, p.2.

⁴² Bowman, p.39.

can easily be seen then, during the time of its greatest need – during the nineteenth century when the capital city experienced explosive demographic growth – the Archdiocese of Vienna established the least number of new parishes. The reasons for this have yet to be examined. The consequences, however, were disastrous.

Table 2. Catholic Parishes – Vienna and Suburbs, 1780-1985

<i>Date of Parish Creation</i>	<i># Created</i>	<i>% of Total Parishes in Vienna</i>
< 1780	28	18.06
1780-1790	40	25.8
> 1790	87	56.12
1790-1932	18	11.6
1932-1955	45	29.03
1955-1985	24	15.48
Total	155	100.00

Although Joseph II in 1783 determined parish sizes of 1000 “souls” in the city, each served by two priests, and suburban parishes of 700 persons each with a single priest, by 1850 Viennese parishes already contained as many as 30,000 people for every four or five priests while its suburbs had ratios almost as high with one priest for every 3000-4000 Catholics.⁴³ In 1858 the archdiocesan provincial council acknowledged the impracticality of the original decree and established new limits of 10,000 inhabitants per parish. In 1893 a joint commission of clerical and lay leaders organized by then Archbishop Anton Cardinal Gruscha again revised the assessments to match the inevitability of their situation, recommending parish sizes of no more than 25,000 Catholics for Vienna and its newly incorporated suburbs.

Needless to say, in Favoriten and other working class districts even these drastically revised ratios would not occur. Instead, St. John the Evangelist and others were left with parishes two and three times the recommended size. In fact, in 1900, a year before the second parish of St. Anton was created in the tenth district, St. John the Evangelist reported 110,000 Catholics which meant a ratio of 1 priest for every 18,333 parishioners (Table 3).

⁴³ Weissensteiner, p.105.

Table 3. Priest-to-Parishioner Ratios for St. John the Evangelist and Votivkirche

Year	<i>St. John the Evangelist (1876), District X</i> <i>Patron: Religious Fund</i>			<i>Votivkirche (1880), District IX</i> <i>Patron: Religious Fund</i>		
	# Priests / # Kooperateurs	# “Souls”	Ratio: P+K/S	# Priests / # Kooperateurs	# “Souls”	Ratio: P+K/S
1876	1/3	38,000	1:9,500	–	–	–
1880	1/4	45,000	1:9,000	1/3	–	–
1890	1/4	70,009	1:11,668	1/3	–	–
1895	1/5	70,009	1:11,668	1/3	12,489	1:3,122
1900	1/5	110,000	1:18,333	1/3	13,000	1:3,250
1905	1/5	56,999	1:9,500	1/3	11,489	1:2,872
1910	1/5	62,053	1:10,342	1/3	11,489	1:2,872
1914	1/5	62,053	1:10,342	1/3	10,512	1:2,628

Of course, as Bowman notes, “Vienna was not the only major European city to experience industrialization, urbanization, and demographic growth in the nineteenth century.... Nevertheless, Vienna’s parishes were extremely large even by European standards.”⁴⁴ In fact, as early as 1865, Vienna’s archbishop, Joseph Cardinal Rauscher, complained to Emperor Franz Josef that Vienna had surpassed Paris’ shameful distinction of having the worst priest-to-parishioner ratios in all of Catholic Europe.

Unfortunately, new parishes would not be forthcoming and the consequences for both church and monarchy would be grim. As the Austrian empire staggered into the modern era at the end of the nineteenth century it “sought desperately to utilize Catholicism as a stabilizing force” against the onrushing tide of nationalism, liberalism, and radical Socialism.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the Catholic Church, long since only a shadow of its former self, was at its weakest point. Having lost all connection with parishioners it could no longer perform its traditional role as unifier of Habsburg crown lands. At this most important juncture, the Church could neither instill Catholic or imperial allegiances let alone inoculate against other increasingly anti-imperial and secularizing forces. It should be no surprise, then, that the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 brought a similar demise to its historical

⁴⁴ Bowman, p.41. Incidentally, by the end of the nineteenth century Favoriten had the largest parishes of all of Vienna, and therefore, of all of Europe.

⁴⁵ Bowman, p.1.

ally, the Catholic Church. The disintegration of the empire, the banishment of its monarch into exile, and its transformation into various republics was mirrored by similar circumstances in the capital as Socialists stormed the city, banished the Church to social isolation and insignificance, and claimed "Red Vienna" for themselves.

Rites of Passage

As seen above the Josephinian reforms of the last decades of the eighteenth century were meant to provide some degree of state influence and religious uniformity with regards to the manner in which Austria's clergy were to maintain "Catholic influence" over its people and to "fashion a coherent religious culture" for Catholics in each parish. With the abolition of almost all demonstrations of popular religious devotion (feast days, processions, pilgrimages, confraternities), more institutional forms of religious practice (i.e., rites of passage) necessarily gained added significance. Priests, therefore, were admonished to both "preside over and preserve the religious significance of baptisms, marriages, and a whole host of community-based rituals."⁴⁶ While these religious duties in their own right were appropriate and desirable, it was their sheer volume as well as the burden of the accompanying secular bureaucratic responsibilities that ultimately would contribute to the overwhelming of parish clergy. Originally, the idea of requiring all births, weddings, and funerals to be registered at the local parish (where most Austrians would head anyway) seemed inspired for its efficient streamlining of administration and its promise of the opportunity for religious instruction. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, priests in working class parishes like St. John the Evangelist found their time so fully occupied fulfilling the bureaucratic aspect of these ritual observances that no time remained for either spiritual reflection or moral education. In the end, then, these reforms which offered so much promise at their outset became a pyrrhic victory for Austria's Catholic Church.

Despite the many problems the priests of St. John the Evangelist parish and elsewhere encountered in the nineteenth century from industrialization, urbanization, and the astronomically high priest-to-parishioner ratios that resulted, they still desired to maintain strong relationships with their parishioners and to provide appropriate spiritual guidance for their ever-growing flocks. The rhythms of urban life being what they were, the most direct contact between priests and parishioners oc-

⁴⁶ Bowman, p.38.

curred through participation in various religious practices and in particular those rites of passage involving baptisms, weddings, and funerals.⁴⁷ Bowman observes that, “both the stages of life – birth, marriage, death – and the cycle of the year had their accompanying religious observances and significance.... To the extent that Catholicism helped order and discipline Austrian society, the desires of the Catholic hierarchy tended to coincide with those of Austrian government officials.”⁴⁸

Indeed, “the sacramental life of Catholicism went hand-in-hand with human biology [in that] for each important stage of life there was a corresponding sacrament. The believer was in this way continually reminded that every juncture of life should be accompanied by an act of faith and a renewal of commitment to the Catholic community, including the local priest.”⁴⁹ This was certainly the desired outcome, although as can be seen in St. John the Evangelist parish, the tremendous number of baptisms, weddings, and funerals conducted on a yearly basis by its priests left little time for the all-important relationship-building, let alone any additional pastoral ministry.

Baptisms

Bowman dryly noted that, “when a newborn child was baptized into the Catholic fold, it simultaneously experienced its first taste of [Viennese] bureaucracy.” Indeed, parish priests were responsible for recording all births, including the names of parents, and whether the child was legitimate.⁵⁰ This last condition could in no way be taken for granted in Vienna in the late 19th century. In fact, illegitimacy was so widespread that “priests habitually cited illegitimate births as evidence of moral decay in their parishes.”⁵¹ One historian even has suggested that “the proportion of illegitimate births in Austria was the worst in all Europe.”⁵² During this period (1875-1910) as many as 53% of couples living together in Favoriten were unmarried and parish priests from St. John the Evangelist routinely admitted their worst duty was marrying young couples on their death beds (high rates of disease impacted even the young) in order to legitimize their children.⁵³

⁴⁷ Bowman, p.177

⁴⁸ Bowman, p.179.

⁴⁹ Bowman, p.181.

⁵⁰ Bowman, p.181.

⁵¹ Bowman, p.182.

⁵² Oscar Jászi. *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (1929), p.156.

⁵³ Schattauer, p.29.

Despite the social and religious difficulties surrounding illegitimate births, the Catholic Church still attempted to use the sacrament of baptism as an opportunity to incorporate children into the religious community. It was hoped that this ritual would be the first of many opportunities on the part of the Church to instill a Catholic cultural ethos in its parish members. Unfortunately, while priests could ensure that only the children of Catholics received baptism, “it was impossible to legislate the parents’ commitment to the Catholic religion.”⁵⁴ Of course, considering the frantic pace with which St. John the Evangelist priests were forced to conduct baptisms, it is a wonder they had time to ponder the parents’ loyalties to the faith at all.

Table 4. Baptisms by Year in St. John the Evangelist Parish

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total # of Baptisms</i>	<i># Illegitimate</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i># per Priest</i>
1877	1971	472	24	493
1880	2094	459	22	419
1890	2703	750	28	541
1900	3942	936	24	657
1910	1274	272	21	212
1914	914	161	18	152

A quick survey of the numbers of baptisms performed by parish priests will shed some light on the enormity of the task set before them (Table 4). In the first full year of the parish’s existence (1877), a total of 1971 baptisms were undertaken. To give a sense of what this looked like in practice, one busy priest baptized on five different days 23, 18, 26, 25, and 19 children.⁵⁵ In 1900, when St. John the Evangelist parish was at its most pressured (just before the 1901 creation of St. Anton parish), a total of 3942 baptisms were performed including marathon stints by one kooperatur of 42, 43, 44, 46, 49, 54, and 60 baptisms on separate days that year. By 1910 the total number of yearly baptisms was 1274, down to 212 per priest. Since it is known that the overall population of the parish had increased between 1900 and 1910, the most plausible explanation for the lower number of requests for baptism

⁵⁴ Bowman, p.183.

⁵⁵ Statistics compiled from St. John the Evangelist’s *Geburts-und-Tauf Register* (baptisms) for various years, July 2001. The particular dates of Anton Kuhnert’s heroic undertakings were 21 January, 18 February, 10 June, 19 August, and 18 November. An analytical study concerning the high volume of baptisms on these dates has yet to be completed.

is a decline in overall church affiliation. Needless to say, with what amounted to assembly-line baptisms, it was virtually impossible for St. John the Evangelist's parish priests to give proper meaning to the sacrament, let alone take the opportunity for any significant contact with parishioners.

Weddings

Marriage in Austria was both a civil and a church affair where each desired to retain control of the institution because of its perceived role as a social and moral stabilizer. Weddings were public rituals in which those wishing to marry had to satisfy state requirements concerning their age, blood relationship, and other conditions, as well as those of the Church including the reading of public banns and the priest's investigating their marital and reproductive histories.⁵⁶ The Church also controlled the times when marriage ceremonies would be performed, and prohibited weddings during the Lenten and Advent seasons. Besides being preoccupied with the major preparations surrounding Easter and Christmas, priests believed marriages and the celebrations that accompanied them were out of keeping with the solemn nature of these times.⁵⁷ This meant the number of requests for weddings during the other ten months of the year would necessarily increase, with the obvious consequences to a priest's workload.

The parish of St. John the Evangelist abided by the letter of the law regarding these ordinances, particularly with regards to the observances of Lent and Advent, but had a harder time fulfilling the sacred spirit of the marriage ceremony due, again, to the overwhelming numbers of weddings in any given year (Table 5). With yearly averages generally hovering above one hundred per priest, little individual care or attention could be given each wedding, let alone proper investigation ahead of time.⁵⁸

Parish priests admitted to having to shorten wedding ceremonies to include only the most necessary legal and sacramental elements. This often meant not performing the desired Holy Mass for each ceremony thereby again losing a valuable opportunity to encourage participants to renew their connection to, and involvement in,

⁵⁶ Bowman, p.186.

⁵⁷ Bowman, p.187.

⁵⁸ Parish priests in St. John the Evangelist insisted on at least a minimum of identifying documentation, turning away those who could not provide adequate papers from home parishes, etc. This may help to account for the high instances of unmarried couples living together in Favoriten, although other factors must explain an increased willingness to do so.

their parish community. For most inhabitants of Favoriten the spiritual significance of this religious rite of passage, long considered one of the most sacred and inviolable for Catholics, became lost in the bureaucratic shuffle of official paperwork. The sacrament, quite simply, had become superfluous.

Table 5. Weddings by Year in St. John the Evangelist Parish

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total # of Weddings</i>	<i># per Priest</i>	<i># During Lent</i>	<i># During Advent</i>
1877	376	94	4	2
1880	435	87	1	1
1890	739	148	1	2
1900	1156	193	8	6
1910	614	102	14	8
1914	712	119	7	22

Besides the obvious story of overwork in the statistics provided above, interesting anomalies presented themselves, which served to put additional burdens on priests at various junctures. For instance, in 1877, a year that saw 376 weddings in total, priests kept busy performing 13 in one day. On a yearly basis, an extraordinarily high number of marriages occurred in February, culturally favored because of Vienna’s famous Carnivale and Ball season and because Lent would follow the month after. And on the eve of World War I in August 1914, 156 weddings took place, including 42 on August 1st. This would represent more weddings in one month’s time than any other after 1900. Interestingly enough, only 31 weddings in St. John the Evangelist parish between 1876 and 1914 involved mixed religions, that is, marriages between Catholics and Protestants, Jews, or others, and only 37 divorces were recording for the same period, with none coming before 1900. At first glance, this would appear to provide strong evidence for the longevity of adherence to religious rites of passage among Vienna’s working class, in that religion continued to have social significance if only nominally so. Unfortunately, a more realistic assessment suggests that most members of St. John the Evangelist chose alternative paths to a Catholic marriage. These could have been civil unions – legal since the 1860s and gaining in popularity, non-Catholic weddings (although very few practicing non-Catholics resided in Favoriten), or living arrangements that did not include marriage of any kind. In fact, as was noted earlier in Favoriten, as many as 53% of couples in the district remained unmarried. The more likely scenario, then, appears

that Catholicism was steadily losing ground as a source of moral and social influence in Vienna's tenth district.

Funerals

The marking of death was a considerably less joyful observance than the celebrations connected with weddings, but no less an important rite of passage for Catholics. Last rites administered by priests to the dying were actually intended in 19th century Austria to be a series of sacraments in which individuals made a final confession and then received communion. As much for the person dying as for others, this ritual was meant by Catholic priests as a means to use the "promise of eternal life after death [to] condition people to obey the Catholic Church's teachings in life."⁵⁹ This was the ideal situation, of course, as many people, hoping to recover from serious illnesses waited too long and died before receiving the sacraments at all. In other cases, the illusion that the Catholic Church held power over death had long since been dispelled and the sacraments were not even asked for. In general, however, what performing this important rite of passage meant for the overly taxed but faithful priests of St. John the Evangelist was that often the only time they visited the home of a parishioner was in order to administer last rites.

Table 6. Funerals by Year in St. John the Evangelist Parish

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total # of Funerals</i>	<i># per Priest</i>
1877	1183	237
1880	1449	290
1890	2274	455
1900	3109	518
1910	814	136
1914	—	—

Table 6 shows a disheartening picture of ritual life concerning death and funerals in St. John the Evangelist parish at the end of the nineteenth century. With an average of more than funeral every day for every priest in some years, it was impossible to pay due respect or attention to the associated religious rituals accompanying funerals. Priests often were forced to forego a proper funeral with its somber and

⁵⁹ Bowman, p.189.

beautiful Requiem mass and opt instead for a much more simplified liturgy in its place.⁶⁰ Even in 1914, by which time funeral responsibilities had declined significantly (again showing evidence of the active presence of the militant SPÖ in Favoriten) there were too many to give each one appropriate care and reflection. Priests found themselves still too harried to offer more than some attempts at minimal comfort and solace for families.

While in theory the sacraments surrounding the rites of passage of baptisms, weddings, and funerals were special observances which served both spiritual and social needs in the life of Austrian Catholics, in practice for most members of Vienna's tenth district these occasions simply became perfunctory nods to religious convention and social convenience. The lack of time on the part of priests to imbue each event with some semblance of the sacred, or at the very least the participants with some bond to the parish church, significantly diminished the pastoral effectiveness of parish ministry in Vienna's working class parishes. Certainly for the long-suffering priests of St. John the Evangelist, the idealistic notion that "the sacramental dimensions of Catholic religious culture could promote a strong sense of order and discipline among parishioners" had long since been lost in the practical reality confronting them on a daily basis.⁶¹

Conclusions

For Austria in general, and Vienna in particular, the Industrial Revolution was experienced in a "compressed fashion." As Bowman appropriately writes, "a person could change from a peasant-artisan, to a semi-skilled laborer, to a factory worker in a single generation."⁶² Likewise, in the same period of time, Vienna rose with stunning speed from its humble beginnings as a provincial capital to become a cosmopolitan center without equal in the 1890s. Unfortunately, these rapid changes in social and economic conditions severely tested the ability of the Catholic Church to keep pace in Vienna, and especially in Favoriten.

At the beginning of the century the traditional alliance between the Catholic Church and the Habsburg monarchy appeared stronger than ever following the Jo-

⁶⁰ Johann Weissensteiner, "Großstadtseelsorge in Wien. Zur Pfarrentwicklung von der josephinischen Pfarregulierung bis in das 20. Jahrhundert" in *Seelsorge und Diakonie in Berlin. Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kirche und Großstadt im 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert*, K. Elum and H.D. Loock, editors. (Berlin, 1990), p.118.

⁶¹ Bowman, p.181.

⁶² Bowman, p.30.

sephinian reforms. Both institutions were united in their desire to reinforce institutional allegiances and ecclesiastical and social hierarchies among the empire's inhabitants. Priests, as trustworthy servants of the state, encouraged religious participation in acceptable devotional practices, such as rites of passage, in order to increase “opportunities for conditioning the religious sensibilities, moral character, and political attitudes of Austrian Catholics.”⁶³ Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, Catholicism and Austrian society began to part ways as a new social, cultural, political, and indeed secular, landscape was created. This meant that by century's end, the Church had lost all prospect of controlling any religious, social, or political aspects of Vienna's working class population. At the time when the monarchy would most desperately need the support of its ally, the Church was at its most powerless to respond.

While the causes have yet to be thoroughly explored, the extremely high priest-to-parishioner ratios and heavy vocational responsibilities of priests in St. John the Evangelist and other parishes appear to be a major contributing factor. As the Catholic Church lost its struggle to establish an effective pastoral strategy in the face of such unrelenting forces as industrialization, urbanization, and modernization, its failure made itself most acutely felt in the instances of the sacraments and rites of passage – those religious practices at the core of the Catholic faith. As a result of the Josephinian reforms these rituals were virtually all that remained as expressions of popular devotion for Austrian Catholics. In fact, even the interpersonal connections of laity and clergy, an integral part of community life in rural settings, had been severed in the great urban contexts of Europe's cosmopolitan centers. Therefore, when parish priests, over-worked and under-represented in the enormous inner city parishes of Vienna's working class districts, could do no more than provide cursory attention to these sacramental practices, it signaled the final decline for Viennese Catholicism among the working class. After decades of poor pastoral care, despite heroic efforts to the contrary, and no organized response from the Church for relieving the equally distressing material conditions, workers began looking elsewhere for social, economic, and political (religious?) sustenance. Unfortunately for St. John the Evangelist parish in Favoriten, the consequences would be a trading in of the Church's assurances of a heavenly reward for the SPÖ's pledge of a “promised land” on earth. As it turned out, the 1920's arrived much sooner than eternity.

⁶³ Bowman, p.2.

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