

BABY JESUS FIGURINE FOUND: Florissant, MO., man charged in St. Boniface Church theft

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville Police have found the missing baby Jesus figurine from the St. Boniface Church nativity scene display at 110 N. Buchanan St. and also made an arrest.



On Friday, Jan. 8, 2016, **Matthew J. Fellhauer (Age 25) of Florissant, MO.**, was arrested for one count of Theft Under \$500 and one count of Criminal Damage to Property in connection with this incident. Both offenses are class A misdemeanors. Fellhauer was released on a notice to appear at the Madison County Courthouse.

During a subsequent investigation, the suspect was identified and police learned the Jesus figurine may have been discarded on the grounds of the Watershed Nature Center in Edwardsville. On Thursday, Jan. 7, 2016, a citizen visiting the Watershed Nature Center found the Jesus figurine and returned it to St. Boniface Church. The figurine had sustained damage to one of the arms.

Lt. Michael Fillback of the Edwardsville Police Department, said the baby Jesus figurine had deep meaning with St. Boniface Church and the Edwardsville community. He added that each year, St. Boniface goes to great efforts to have the Christmas display with the baby Jesus figurine in front of the church.

“The figurine is a piece of concrete, but it represents so much more to the people of Edwardsville,” he said. “It is a symbol of Christianity and it may seem like a little thing to some, but it means a lot to the church and others in the community. We don’t want people to think it is acceptable to come in and tear up other people’s property.”

Through its Edwardsville Police Department Facebook page and social media, the office acquired some information the baby Jesus figurine could be in the Watershed Nature Center area, where it was dropped. Once this story was reported on Facebook, someone came upon it and had read about it and returned it to St. Boniface, although it was a little damaged.”

Also via social media, the Edwardsville Police learned of information that led to identify the person who was involved.

“We have met with the suspect and charged him,” Fillback said. “One of the good things about social media is it helps spread the word. The person we charged will now get his day in court.”

St. Boniface Church personnel reported the figurine missing on Jan. 4, 2016. It was believed the figurine was stolen sometime during the week of Christmas.

The Edwardsville Police Department has been diligently investigating the theft of the baby Jesus figurine over past week.

Fillback said one of the good things about a community like Edwardsville is people are so engaged.

“When people see things they know to report them to the city and we will try to take corrective action or solve the problem,” the lieutenant said. “We pay a lot of attention to the little stuff. The little things add up to the big things. We try to pay attention to everything from garage sale signs or people keeping yards in a respectful fashion.

“Those little things add up to help a higher expectation and sense of pride in the community. The more pride we can have in the community and pride citizens have, it is less likely people will come here and feel they can do whatever they want.”

The Edwardsville Police wish to remind the public that a charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.