

Accompanying story to video by Adam Clements/WKRC Channel 12 News, regarding the annual "Stealing of the St. Patrick Statue". February 17, 2013

A local church falls victim to a band of thieves, as a valuable statue is stolen. It happened Sunday at Holy Cross Immaculata church in Mount Adams. The crooks made off with a famous statue of St. Patrick.

But...this isn't the first time the statue has been taken. In fact, this has happened every single year at the church for more than 4 decades. The odd thing is, no one seems to mind. That's because this is all in good fun.

In fact, it's a time honored ritual for the Catholics in Mount Adams, even if it is a little on the scandalous side. Kevin Crowley, Crowley's Bar, says "Holy Cross, the Irish Catholic church had closed, and they had moved the statue of St. Patrick to the German Catholic church, so that didn't sit well with Jim. So after a few beers, he went over and took it and replaced it with a miniature St. Patrick statue."

That Jim is Jim Crowley of Crowley's Bar. He pulled off the first statue swiping back in 1971. Every year since, the spectacle has grown into a celebration that now kicks off the St. Patrick's Day celebration in Mount Adams, a party that lasts for weeks.

Tootsie Crowley, Crowley's Bar, says "Being Irish is who we are and history. Mount Adams has changed, obviously, but it's all about history. And it's about being proud to be Irish."

This year, Dublin Ireland Transplant Jason Brennan was invited to help the ancient order of Hibernians with the heist. The honorary henchman says "It was the most unusual thing I've ever seen today. It was fantastic. They actually let me be a henchman today, which was a privilege and an honor."

The bad blood that originated more than 40 years ago when 2 churches combined seems to have cooled. After all, how angry can you be when the church is a stone's throw away from a place where everybody knows your name. "They even got me a pint of Guinness for free."

For those of you wondering where the statue goes when it's stolen and how the church gets it back in their possession... Well, we're not at liberty to say exactly where the statue is at this point, but every year without fail, it's spotted downtown at the St. Patrick's Day parade.

The folks at Crowley's Bar in Mount Adams are still very active in the tradition. Every year, they host a celebration after the statue of St. Patrick is stolen complete with bagpipes, and of course, beer.