

BRANDING

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THE HISTORY

Drive through the winding lanes of Connecticut and you'll discover a honeycomb of neighborhoods, parks, squares, and churches. East of New Haven along the Long Island Sound, the town of Branford is rich in stories reaching back generations.

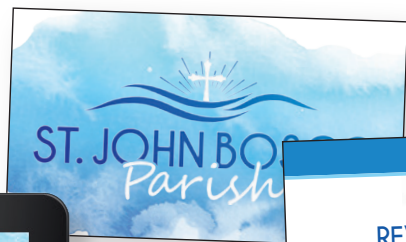
The churches of Branford have a diverse history. St. Mary, founded in the mid-nineteenth century, served the growing Catholic immigrant population. A convent, school, and parish hall were added over the years in the heart of town. Along the shore, St. Therese grew out of a mission church in sight of the scenic Thimble Islands. On the west side of town, St. Elizabeth began as a Vincentian mission in the Short Beach neighborhood.

For decades, the Catholics of Branford had taken their parish identity from their sections of town and unique histories. But shifting demographics are causing dioceses across the United States to rethink the historical boundaries of individual churches. The Archdiocese of Hartford is no exception.

THE CHALLENGE

As part of the new strategic plan, these three parishes would be combined into one. Now they faced the new, daunting challenge of unifying their community and giving public witness to one parish identity.





Each church involved faced changes: Mass times, priest assignments, merging programs, and the shuttering of St. Elizabeth. Adding significantly to the obstacles was the new name, St. John Bosco, a saint few parishioners knew.

At the time of the merger, Emily Naylor had been the parish secretary for nearly four years. Naylor witnesses firsthand the questions and concerns brought forward by parishioners. "The merger presented the challenge of bringing people together who were very used to having their own churches with the unique characteristics of each neighborhood," Naylor shares. "There were quite understandably raw emotions from all three parishes."

During the merger process, communication was key. The parish staff wanted to keep the focus on the positive. Observing the opportunities, Naylor comments, "By combining resources and not having parishes only focused on finding the money to keep themselves open, the new parish can now hopefully have the time, resources, and financial stability to be able to focus on things like evangelization."

The pastor appointed to St. John Bosco, Fr. Daniel Keefe, recognized that something tangible was needed. "We wanted to communicate that we were all on the same playing field," he shares. "We were all parishioners of St. John Bosco."

THE SOLUTION

Complete Parish Rebranding by Liturgical Publications became a key part of the unification process. St. Mary had been an LPi customer for its bulletin and website, so staff was familiar with the company. Emily Naylor and the former parochial vicar were charged with overseeing the rebranding process.

The team shared its vision with LPi. “We were trying to find some common ground ... that would bring comfort to the fear of the unknown and change that faced all of us. We also wanted it to be evangelizing at the same time,” Naylor says. LPi’s graphic designers presented several options, working quickly to ensure that the final design would be ready the day the merger took place.

The final design spoke to multiple elements of the newly formed parish’s identity. Branford being a shoreline town, the color blue and the images of waves dominate the visual look. “The waves and the rays have an outward motion to them, symbolizing our going forth into the community, while also being rooted in Christ [the cross icon] and drawing nourishment from him each week at Mass,” Naylor explains.

The staff hopes that the logo’s modern look communicates something new to the community. “It helps the parishioners feel like they really belong to something, and might give them the confidence to share it with others,” Naylor shares. The Branford area was once deeply, culturally Catholic. Over the past few decades, many have drifted from the life of the Church. The parish is optimistic that the united visual presence can reach the community in new ways. “It shows that there are fresh ideas in the parish and it’s not just living in the past, doing everything as it has always been done,” Naylor says.

THE HOPE

There’s no doubt that transitions like this are difficult, but the St. John Bosco staff see plenty of opportunity for hope. “The merger is shaking us out of our complacency and habits,” Naylor shares. “It’s causing us to remember what it means to be the Church—that it’s not just about us and God, but about the people around us too.”

To emphasize the new, unified identity, St. John Bosco uses the brand comprehensively across all its communications: the website, bulletin cover,

social media, parish app, and additional print resources such as stationery, envelopes, and note cards.

“The new logo helped to give everyone a fresh start and be of the same mindset and mission,” Fr. Keefe observes. “When parishioners feel united in a common purpose, parish life begins to feel much more integrated across the different ministries and the parish can move forward as a whole.”



*For more information
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