

Winter 2026

ACADEMY CONNECTION

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC ACADEMY
DIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY-ST. JOSEPH



Welcome



A message from our President, Mrs. Natalie Newville:

As we look ahead with excitement and gratitude, I want to share several important updates from St. Joseph Catholic Academy.

Enrollment for the 2026–2027 academic year is now open! I strongly encourage all current families to complete their enrollment as soon as possible to ensure your child’s spot for next year. Early enrollment not only guarantees placement, but also plays a vital role in helping us thoughtfully plan for staffing, classroom sections, and the resources needed to continue delivering an exceptional Catholic education.

As we think about the future of our Academy, I also want to emphasize something incredibly important: our parents are our best recruiters. The most powerful way new families learn about our schools is through the stories and experiences of those who are already part of our community. When you share why you chose SJCA, invite another family to visit, or simply talk about the difference a Catholic education has made for your child, you help strengthen and grow our community. Your enthusiasm and support are one of the greatest gifts you can give the Academy.

We are also exploring the revival of our grade school theater program for the 2026–2027 school year. The arts are such an important part of forming confident, creative, and collaborative students. If you will have a 5th–8th grader next year, please take a moment to complete the interest survey by scanning the QR code to the right. Your feedback will help us determine next steps and build a program that serves our students well.



Our Capital Campaign work continues to move forward, and we are energized by the progress already made. Each step brings us closer to strengthening our facilities and enhancing the environment where our students learn, grow, and deepen their faith. We are grateful for the generosity and belief in our mission that make this progress possible, and we look forward to sharing more milestones with you in the months ahead.

Finally, as we prepare future editions of our magazine, we would love to feature voices from across our Academy. If you are interested in contributing as a guest writer, please let us know. Our story is strongest when it reflects the many perspectives, talents, and experiences within our community.

Thank you for your continued partnership, support, and commitment to our mission. Together, we are building something truly special for our students—now and for generations to come.

Natalie Newville



St. Joseph Catholic Academy
3529 Frederick Ave.
St. Joseph, MO 64506

President:
Natalie Newville

Controller:
John Hapak

Special Education:
Sherry Russell

Admin. Assistant:
Michelle Ide

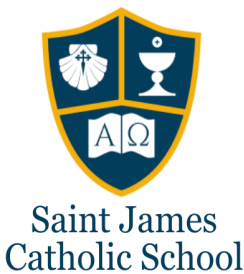
Athletic Director:
Kasey Waterman

Academy Updates

Uniform Reminder: Beginning in August 2026, our uniform policy will be for the “new” uniforms only.



K-5 Uniforms
 Polos: White or Hunter Green
 Pants or Shorts: Navy
 Plaid Jumpers: K-4th grade
 Plaid Skirts: 3rd-5th Grade
 Sweaters: Navy or Hunter Green Cardigan or v-neck with polo
 ¼ Zips: Navy with campus or SJCA Logo with polo
 Crewneck Sweatshirts: Navy or Hunter Green With SJCA or Campus Logo



6-8 Uniforms
 Polos: Navy, White, or Hunter Green
 Pants or Shorts: Khaki
 Plaid Skirts
 Sweaters: Navy or Hunter Green Cardigan or v-Neck with Polo
 ¼ Zips: Navy with campus or SJCA Logo with polo
 Crewneck Sweatshirts: Navy or Hunter Green with SJCA or Campus Logo with polo

9-12 Uniforms
 Polos: Navy, White, or Hunter Green
 Pants or Shorts: Khaki
 Plaid Skirts
 Sweaters: Navy or Hunter Green Cardigan or v-neck with LB or SJCA Logo and polo
 ¼ Zips: Black with LB or SJCA Logo with polo

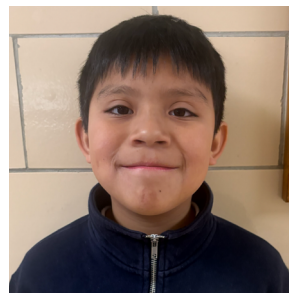


What’s one moment this year at school that made you feel proud to be part of our community?



Agnes - PreK - St. Gianna

When I was feeling sad my friend gave me a hug and it made me feel better. I really liked that!



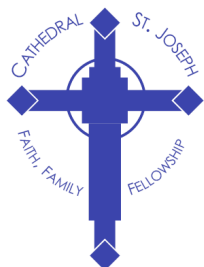
Cesar - 4th - St. James

I am proud to be part of our after school choir. When I joined for the first time, I really got to let all of my singing out and it was beautiful.



Isabella - 8th - Cathedral

Participating in the Advent Cans Wars made me feel good to donate food to help feed the hungry and help the homeless.



Layla - 8th - St. Francis Xavier

One moment this year at school that made me feel proud to be part of Saint Francis’ community is going to All School Masses. I look forward to going to Masses and hearing the songs that praise God. I also really love listening to the pastor speak and read the readings. Going to mass makes me feel calm even during a hard day. Mass makes me feel so proud to be a part of the Saint Francis community, every single day.



Katie - Senior - Bishop LeBlond

One moment from this year that made me feel proud to be part of our community was finding out that, as a school, we collected over 4,700 non-perishable food items to donate to Second Harvest Food Bank during the Christmas season! I am very proud that, as a community at LB, we came together to help those in need.



Pastoral Perspective



A message from our Pastoral Coordinator, Fr. Stephen Hansen:

As I write this article just days before the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, Apostle on February 22nd, I am reminded of its significance.

“This Feast commemorates the office of supreme pastor that Christ conferred upon St. Peter, a role that continues in unbroken succession to this day. It celebrates the unity of the Church, founded upon the Apostle, and reinforces our commitment to the teaching authority (Magisterium) of the Roman Pontiff...”

This quote from the Daily Roman Missal serves as a timely reminder for us to pray for Pope Leo XIV, who was born right here in the United States. One prominent message from Pope Leo that resonates with me is unity, a theme he has emphasized since his election. This is certainly something for which we thank God in having a Pope!

At St. Joseph Catholic Academy, we are uniting our schools while allowing each institution’s charisms and spirit to flourish. I fondly remember graduating from St. Lucy’s in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1976, the same year we celebrated the 200th anniversary of our nation. This year, we celebrate our 250th! Cathedral School is also commemorating its 125th anniversary.

Being united with the Pope, our Bishop, and other schools in the Academy across the United States is a profound calling! As we approach Lent, consider embracing two pieces of advice from Pope Leo: “Abstain from harsh words and rash judgment.” When we engage in harsh words or make rash judgments, we often feel worse about ourselves and our treatment of others. By resisting these tendencies, we foster unity and open dialogue. This practice can help us envision Jesus Christ more clearly in our lives.

Wishing you a wonderful Spring!

Thank you for entrusting your children to St. Joseph Catholic Academy!

WE'RE HIRING!

**Be part of something greater.
Join St. Joseph Catholic Academy.**

Why Work With Us?

- Faith-Centered Mission
- Supportive, Family-Oriented Culture
- Academic Excellence with Strong Leadership
- Meaningful Impact Every Day
- K-12 Tuition Scholarships for Full-Time Employees' Children

Apply today:

St. Gianna EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER | St. Francis Xavier Catholic School | Saint James Catholic School | Bishop Lablond High School

All-Academy Mass



The St. Joseph Catholic Academy community recently gathered for a special All-Academy Mass celebrated by Bishop Johnston at Bishop LeBlond High School. This meaningful event brought together students, faculty, and staff from across all SJCA campuses, creating a powerful reminder of the unity that defines our Catholic school family.

A highlight of the celebration was the recognition of this year's Principal Scholarship winners. One 8th grade student from each SJCA campus was awarded a renewal scholarship to Bishop LeBlond based on their Placement Test scores.

The All-Academy Mass provided an excellent opportunity for our entire community to come together in prayer and worship. Sharing this experience strengthens the bonds between campuses and reinforces our shared mission of forming students academically, spiritually, and personally. Moments like these reflect the heart of SJCA: a community rooted in faith, united in purpose, and committed to growing together.

Class of 2030 Principal's Scholarship Winners

Cathedral - Harper Libel

St. Francis - Madison Miller

St. James - Romey Hann

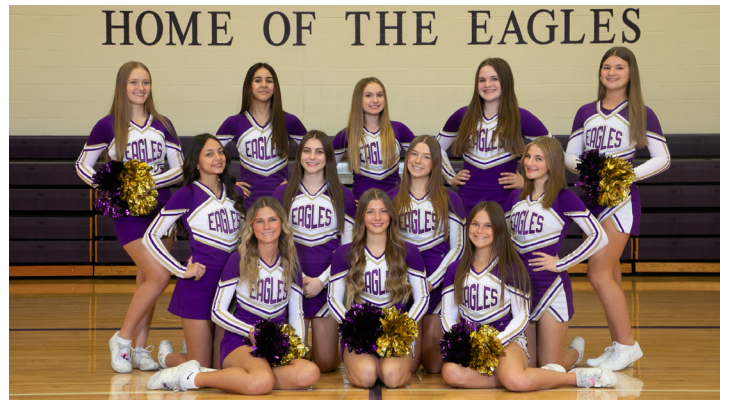


Athletics

Cross Country Boys Team and Individual Girls Compete at State!

The fall season was filled with impressive performances, memorable moments, and outstanding achievements for Bishop LeBlond High School Athletics.

Read all about it by scanning the QR code below!



Fine Arts

Gracie Ide, Class of 2026

My senior year we got to put on *High School Musical*. Which was daunting from the beginning considering how small our group is but we pulled it off. We ended up having thirteen high schoolers and sixteen Academy kids. Performing my last musical with my best friends Brody Cathcart (as Troy Bolton) and Aiden Reynolds (as Chad) was the perfect end. I had heard from people outside of our school that we wouldn't be able to pull it off, in the end it was one of our most successful shows. We couldn't have done it without our directors Dr. Mike Wilson and Paul Modlin. Behind the scenes work with Christie Ottinger and Natalie Newville. Even the Theater Arts class spent countless hours building and painting our wonderful sets.



Bishop LeBlond Cantabile Choir



MO Scholars

The Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Accounts Program, known as MOScholars, was established by the Missouri General Assembly in 2021, and the St. Joseph Catholic Academy has seen great benefits from the program since its beginning. There are currently 253 MOScholars in the Academy schools.

“MO Scholars has been an incredible blessing for our Academy because it supports both new families discovering our schools for the first time and legacy families who are deeply rooted in our community and want to continue that tradition,” said Natalie Newville, president of the Academy. “MOScholars helps remove the financial barriers that can prevent families from choosing Catholic education.”

According to the MOScholars website, the law provides state tax credits for contributions to approved, non-profit Educational Assistance Organizations (EAOs). These EAOs use the contributions to award scholarships to Missouri students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and students who qualify financially. The Bright Futures Fund, a 501(c)3 under the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, is designated by the state of Missouri as an EAO and awards the scholarships to qualifying families in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph.

Kent McEnaney, principal of Cathedral School since 2022, said the program has had a great impact on the school and parish. Firstly, he believes it has helped ensure the future of the school.

Natalie agreed. “By expanding access and making tuition more attainable, MOScholars also helps strengthen enrollment, which brings greater stability and sustainability to our schools.”

Kent noted that Catholic schools have always helped families who needed help with tuition, and MOScholars has relieved some of that financial burden.

“MOScholars is helping students from all over the state receive a Catholic education that they wouldn’t have been able to afford otherwise.”

He said the program has brought in new students and families to Cathedral, but it has also greatly benefited their current school families. “With the help of MOScholars, our families don’t have to sacrifice as much as they did before the program.”

Kent said since MOScholars has increased the income to the school, it has also relieved the financial burden of the parish since they subsidize the school. Now, Cathedral parish can fund more ministries with funds that had previously gone to the school.

Father Stephen Hansen, pastor of Cathedral of St. Joseph and St. Mary parishes, noted businesses and individuals can contribute to the Bright Futures Fund as well, not just school families.

“We’re grateful for the almost \$600,000 in Bright Futures Fund tax credits purchases from people and businesses in St. Joseph, and the \$1.7 million Bright Futures Fund scholarships given,” he said.

Kent noted that since the MOScholars started, there have been changes to the eligibility requirements, opening it up to more families. To apply to participate in the MOScholars program or to check for eligibility, scan the QR code.



Support Catholic education with taxes you pay the state!



Half of the taxes you pay in Missouri can be directed to education through the Bright Futures Fund at **NO COST TO YOU.**



The Bright Futures Fund will administer \$15 million in scholarships to qualified Catholic school students in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph *with your help.* Reserve 100% dollar for dollar MOScholars tax credits now.

What is the MOScholars 100% Tax Credit?



The state of Missouri allows any individual or business to direct up to half of your tax liability to education *at no cost to you.* Students and siblings living in low-income households or who have an IEP could qualify for \$6,375 a year for a quality Catholic education in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph - funded by MOScholars tax credits.

Normally, your tax dollars go to the Department of Revenue for the state to decide how to spend.



With MOScholars, you can direct up to half of your state tax liability to an Educational Assistance Organization to support Catholic education.



Ready to make an impact?

- 1 Reserve your tax credits at BrightFuturesFund.org/reserve-tax-credits.html
- 2 Mail your check to Bright Futures Fund, P.O. Box 419037, Kansas City, MO 64141

100% dollar for dollar tax credits!

Questions? We are here to help.
Diocese of KC-St. Joseph
(816) 756-1850



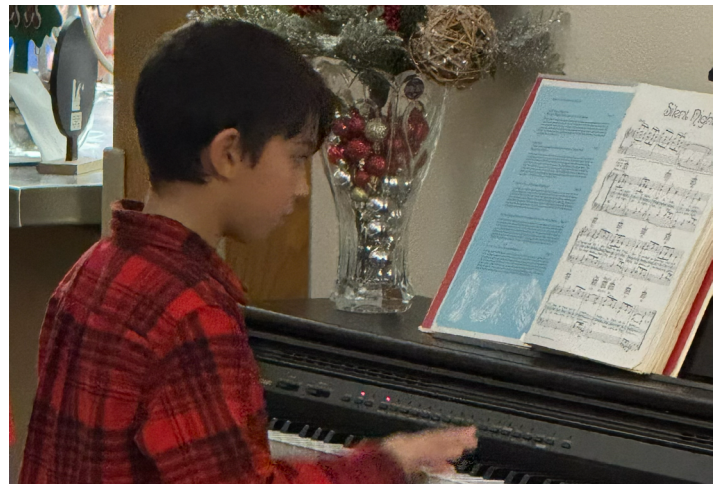
MOScholars
Missouri's Empowerment Scholarship Accounts Program



SCAN ME

Caroling

St. Joseph Catholic Academy students spread holiday cheer by singing Christmas carols at three local nursing homes in the days leading up to Christmas. The special outreach was organized by St. Francis and Cathedral music teacher Ms. G, alongside parent volunteer Erin Goettemoeller. Following the performances, Our Lady of Guadalupe graciously welcomed the families for cookies and hot chocolate. It was a joyful beginning to what we hope will become a cherished new Academy tradition.



Student Government Day

Before Christmas break, middle and high school Student Council members from St. Joseph area schools partnered with the City of St. Joseph for a day of collaboration, leadership, and civic engagement. Student leaders connected with peers from across the city, examined local issues, and worked in cross-school teams to develop thoughtful, student-driven solutions. The day concluded with group presentations to city department chairs, giving students a direct voice in conversations shaping their community.

Following the break, students reconvened to select one initiative to pursue together, officially forming the Student Voice Alliance. Representatives from each high school will continue meeting with city leaders to advance the plan and ensure student perspectives remain an integral part of city decision-making.



FireBall

Members of the St. Joseph Catholic Academy community traveled to Kansas City to celebrate and support the FIRE Foundation at this year's FIREBall. We were especially proud to see St. Francis and the Rippe family featured in the event video, highlighting the powerful impact of inclusion in our schools.

Together, we are creating meaningful opportunities for students with special needs to learn, grow, and shine alongside their siblings and peers in our Catholic schools. Because of your continued support, students of all abilities are able to learn, grow, pray, and thrive—side by side—across our community.



NOGS

Bishop LeBlond supporters took a joyful walk down memory lane at this year's Night of Golden Stars, celebrating school spirit with the theme, "Be True to Your School." Alumni and friends proudly dusted off their letterman's jackets, shared stories from their Golden Eagle days, and came together in support of the next generation of students.

A highlight of the evening was the generous commitment from The Loretto Foundation, which matched the first \$50,000 raised during the Fund-A-Need. Thanks to that incredible support and the enthusiasm of our donors, this year's event focused on strengthening academic technology across campus.

The most pressing needs at Bishop LeBlond include updated classroom technology to create a more streamlined and engaging learning environment, new student Chromebooks, teacher laptops, and enhanced library technology to ensure the space can be fully utilized to support instruction and collaboration.

Because of the dedication of our planning committee, attendees, sponsors, and supporters, the Night of Golden Stars was more than a celebration of the past...it was an investment in the future!



2026 Prayer Breakfast

The fourth annual St. Joseph Catholic Academy Prayer Breakfast was a celebration of faith and community for supporters of Catholic education, community members, and local leaders, and 135 attended. The breakfast was held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church Jan. 31 as part of Catholic Schools Week.

Bishop James V. Johnston Jr. led the event with a prayer, and Lamar Hunt Jr., a member of the founding family of the Kansas City Chiefs and president of Loretto Companies, was the featured speaker. Father Stephen Hansen, pastor of Cathedral of St. Joseph and St. Mary Catholic Church, gave the closing prayer.

Hunt said although he was not raised Catholic, he credits his mother with giving him a strong faith and church experience growing up. He converted to Catholicism as an adult in his 30s and is a member of the Church of the Nativity in Leawood, Kansas. "I had an amazing discovery of the Catholic faith, and am grateful to those who planted the seeds for me."

His faith journey also made him realize how important Catholic schools are, giving students a sense of purpose and community. Catholic schools, he said, plant many seeds of faith in their students. Hunt's children attended Catholic schools, and today his grandchildren are attending.

As parents, he said, our goal is to help our children become saints and go to heaven. It is a lifelong journey that is sometimes challenging, and the Catholic Schools help both parents and students on that path. At the breakfast, he also gave a shoutout to the Academy teachers and staff who dedicate their lives to Catholic education, helping "direct the children toward the divine, loving God and loving their neighbor."

In his talk, Hunt also mentioned the four cardinal virtues that are reflected in Aesop's fables –prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance – and how important it is to practice these virtues.



After the breakfast, Hunt attended the Mass at LeBlond for all Academy students and teachers, officiated by Bishop Johnston.

Hunt said he hopes Prayer Breakfast attendees were influenced by his talk to support the St. Joseph Catholic Academy.

“These schools have been here for many, many years, and it is great that they have all come together to form the St. Joseph Catholic Academy,” he said.

Donations can still be made to the Prayer Breakfast by scanning the QR code.



Loretto Chapel Staircase

Lamar Hunt Jr. is the founder and president of Loretto Companies. Hunt said he named the companies for the Sisters of Loretto and the story of their chapel staircase that was built in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The following is taken from lorettochapel.com/staircase:

When the Loretto Chapel was completed in 1878, there was no way to access the choir loft twenty-two feet above. Carpenters were called in to address the problem, but they all concluded access to the loft would have to be via ladder as a staircase would interfere with the interior space of the small Chapel.

Legend says that to find a solution to the seating problem, the Sisters of the Chapel made a novena to St. Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters. On the ninth and final day of prayer, a man appeared at the chapel with a donkey and a toolbox looking for work. Months later, the elegant circular staircase was completed, and the carpenter disappeared without pay or thanks. After searching for the man (an ad even ran in the local newspaper) and finding no trace of him, some concluded that he was St. Joseph himself, having come in answer to the sisters' prayers.

The stairway's carpenter, whoever he was, built a magnificent structure. The design was innovative for the time and some of the design considerations still perplex experts today.

The staircase has two 360 degree turns and no visible means of support. It is said that the staircase was built without nails—only wooden pegs. Questions also surround the number of stair risers relative to the height of the choir loft and about the types of wood and other materials used in the stairway's construction.



Alumni Profile

Fr. Alex Kreidler '08 - Assessor at the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith



A St. Francis Xavier and Bishop LeBlond alumnus has been called to Rome to serve the Catholic Church in the Vatican. He began his five-year assignment as an Official in the Discipline Section of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in July 2025.

Father Kreidler explained that since the Catholic Church has more than 1 billion members worldwide, it also has its own legal system, which is often called canon law. So he is a lawyer in that legal system, and his main responsibilities include assisting the Dicastery in some of the canonical matters that are sent to it.

Some legal matters, Father Kreidler said, can only be settled by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, and he assists with those matters.

“My favorite part about this position is that I get to assist (as a member of a wonderful team) dioceses and religious orders around the world in what can sometimes be very difficult cases,” he said. “I think it’s very satisfying to be able to help them when they need it.”

Father Kreidler spent six years in Rome in the seminary and studying canon law before he was ordained at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in 2015. He said his classes there were taught in Italian, and the working language of the Dicastery is also Italian.

“I had a good working knowledge of Italian before coming to this position and it made for an easier transition,” Father Kreidler said.

His team, he noted, has also made the transition easier. “Not that I doubted that they would be great, I just didn’t expect them to be so welcoming,” Father Kreidler said. “From day one, I felt like a member of the team and that has been very reassuring when many other things are so new.”

He said the most challenging part of the new position is learning (“which I don’t think will ever end!”) the various procedures or nuances of canon law that are often required in treating the matters that are sent to the Dicastery.

“As a student in Rome, I would go to St. Peter’s Basilica often. As an official, I now have the opportunity to work right next to it and see it almost every day. The Vatican in some ways has become less a place I visit and more a place that has become kind of like a second home.”

Father Kreidler said he began thinking about becoming a priest as an elementary student at St. Francis Xavier. “Catholic schools provide the perfect environment to practice our faith, to learn more about it, and to explore the possibility of following Jesus as one of His priests.”

Father Kreidler had a final message for everyone reading this article.

“The last thing I would add, and I need to remind myself of this all the time, never be afraid to give Jesus everything. No one loves us more than He does and He wants to show us His love in great ways, even in, and especially in, our ordinary, everyday lives.”

Alumni Teacher Profile

Mrs. Mary Ann Didde '70 - English Teacher at Bishop LeBlond HS

What do you currently teach?

English/Language Arts sophomore honors and two senior classes at LeBlond.

How long have you taught in Catholic schools?

Around 50 years! Twenty-five of those were at Cathedral. I also taught at St. Patrick's and LeBlond, and I opened the day care center at Cathedral (now St. Gianna Early Childhood Center, it was the Raven's Nest when I started it.) I have taught every grade except first and second. This is my third stint at LeBlond, and this is my second year. I love it! These kids are spectacular!

Where did you go to college? What is your degree?

Benedictine College. My degrees are in History and Elementary Education, with a Secondary Education minor.

What do you enjoy about teaching in a Catholic school?

The kids and the multigenerational aspect of Catholic schools. I love that I am teaching the third generation of students! I love to go to Sunday Mass and see my former students with their kids and grandkids.

Teaching in a Catholic school is an amazing vocation. There is no other job like it.

Do you have any extra duties?

I am co-sponsor of the Student Council and the National Honor Society. (My name, my daughter's name and my grandson's name are all listed in LeBlond's National Honor Society.)

I also volunteered two summers to help turn the library into a great study space.

What is your best piece of advice for students today?

Read! You have to read well in order to succeed. And read recreationally, too. I am so happy when I see kids carrying books!

What was the last book you read?

"Buckeye," by Patrick Ryan. I read it for my Old Teachers Book Club.

How do you spend your free time? Do you have any hobbies?

I read, garden and travel. We've been all over the world.

What is at the top of your bucket list?

More travel! I really want to visit Normandy.



Whether it's that unforgettable field trip, a team victory, or simply moments with friends, we'd love for you to share your pictures from your time at one of our Catholic Schools!



Save These Dates

March

- 6th: End of Third Quarter
- 6th: Mother Son Dance at OLOG
- 10th: Festival of Arts
- 13th: No School - Diocesan EMF Day
- 16th - 20th: Spring Break
- 19: Cathedral St. Joseph's Day Spaghetti Dinner
- 24th: SJCA Night at Chik Fil A
- 27th: Dodgeball Tournament
- 28th: LeBlond Trivia Night



April

- 1: Cathedral Living Stations of the Cross
- 2nd - 3rd: No School - Holy Week
- 6th: No School - Easter Monday
- 11: Bishop LeBlond Prom
- 11: SFX Auction
- 24: Cathedral Race for Education
- 24th: MS Dance
- 29: Happy 125th Birthday Cathedral School
- 29: LeBlond Blood Drive
- 29: LeBlond Spring Concert

