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### **What is the significance and meaning behind St. Norbert College's presidential seal?**

Paul "Beta" Koehler '59

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## November 2011

### Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

What is the significance and meaning behind St. Norbert College's presidential seal?

Paul "Beta" Koehler '59

### Answer:

My dear Paul,

Thank you most kindly for writing. There is substantial meaning to the object in reference which is reserved for use on diplomas, certificates and other official documents.

You'll find that our beloved institution's coat of arms is integrated in the president's seal. A coat of arms bears designs that herald a person, family or institution, and St. Norbert's is modeled after that of Berne Abbey in Holland, whence I came to De Pere. This is the origin of the bars of color as well as the eight sceptres arranged in star-like pattern – a carbuncle, in heraldic language – that you see on the seal.

In medieval times, a family's first son could claim the same coat of arms as his father, but the second son altered the design, using different colors. Berne Abbey took its coat of arms from Fulco of Berne, who it is said owned the castle that became the original abbey. Thus, when my Norbertine brothers and I arrived in the U.S. from Berne Abbey, we were considered "second sons," which called for a change of color in our device.



### Ask the Abbot

As the founder of St. Norbert College, and having a prime seat in the center of campus throughout the years, I, Abbot Bernard Pennings, hold the answers to many of your burning questions about the college.

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Because Dartmouth College left a favorable impression on one of the college's early rectors, the Rev. John Van Heertum, O.Praem., its colors of green and white were adopted for the seal. Later, when St. Norbert High School chose green and white as its colors, the college changed its own to green and gold.

As for the insignia within the crest, the oak leaves on the left are symbolic of the sturdiness of medieval life. The laurel on the right stands for honor and glory. The words *docere verbo et exemplo*, meaning "To Teach by Word and Example," were added several years ago.

*Responses to "Ask the Abbot" questions are penned by St. Norbert College staff in the name of Abbot Bernard Pennings, O.Praem., who founded St. Norbert College in 1898.*

## St. Norbert College

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