Ask the Abbot   Alumni Relations

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Just how does a Norbertine community go about selecting an abbot?

Julianna Nett '21

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Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

Just how does a Norbertine community go about selecting an abbot?

Julianna Nett '21

Answer:

Dearest Julianna,

I am willing to predict that a vast majority of my readers are not aware of the intricacies associated with the Norbertine abbatial elections. It's always a delight for me have the chance to share the ways of our cherished life in community, and to reflect on how those ways have, judiciously, changed over the years. You see, back in my active days, abbots were elected for life. But in 1970, the worldwide Norbertine order established options for terms.

Before an election is held, all solemn professed members of an abbey (brothers and priests alike) must first agree to one of the following three terms for the next abbot: for life, for a specific number of years, or for a fixed 9- to 12-year term. Should the solemn professed select one of the latter two options, the newly elected abbot would be eligible for re-election when his first term ends. Voting eligibility, too, rests with these solemn professed – those who have pledged themselves to Christ and to the order for life.

In order to be considered as a candidate, one must be a

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.

 Submit Your Question

Norbertine priest, at least 30 years old, and have been in solemn profession for five years. Candidates are elected abbot when they have received 50 percent of the votes, plus one. If no one is elected after the first ballot, a second ballot is held. If no one is elected after the second ballot, a third ballot is held. If no one is elected after the third ballot, a fourth ballot is held. If a fourth ballot is necessary, only the two candidates who received highest votes from the third ballot appear on the new ballot, and those two candidates are not allowed to vote in that round.

The voting process is overseen by the abbot general of the Norbertine order, along with the assistance of another Norbertine. Under their supervision, a secretary and two scrutators (chosen by the community electing) count the paper votes and bring the results forward.

I'm delighted to have learned that the Rt. Rev. Dane Radecki '72 is to be the new abbot of my beloved St. Norbert Abbey. I'll be watching his abbacy from my seat on campus in confidence that the Holy Spirit, our dear sainted brother Norbert, and the carefully designed Rule and constitutions by which we live, will continue to guide our work.

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

St. Norbert College

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