

St. Norbert College

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Ask the Abbot

Alumni Relations

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7-2020

**May I ask, have any SNC alumni had the opportunity to serve the pope?**

Mike Brennan '99

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- Alumni Board
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## July 2020

### Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings:

May I ask, have any SNC alumni had the opportunity to serve the pope?

The Rev. Mike Brennan '99 (College Parish)

### Answer:

My dear confrère,

What a wonderful question to reflect upon during our relaxing summer break!

Our college has long had a very close relationship with our local Catholic dioceses and the Vatican. I remember in particular one of our men who went on to serve on the Roman Rota.

The Roman Rota, otherwise known as the Apostolic Tribunal of the Roman Rota, is the highest appellate court in the Roman Catholic Church. It functions in many ways like the Supreme Court of our own United States, reviewing cases of lower appeals courts. The members, who carry the title of monsignor, are appointed by the pope. They serve on the tribunal until death or retirement. And much like the justices on our national Supreme Court, theirs is one of the highest and most distinguished positions in the church.

I remember when the Rt. Rev. Msgr. William J. Doheny, C.S.C., Class of 1919, was a student on our campus. He was 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.

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promising young man with a tenacious will to learn and grow in his faith and knowledge of the law. In fact, in the 1919 Des Peres – the yearbook of the day – our staff described him in this way: “You couldn’t say this lad is short nor tall, nor could you say he’s fat. But never mind the size – nor big nor small, he has his Logic pat.”

After his commencement in 1919, Doheny attended Holy Cross College in Washington, D.C. He was ordained into the priesthood in 1924. He continued his service as the assistant superior of the Bengalese Foreign Mission Seminary from 1925 to 1928. We followed his career with interest as our young alumnus traveled to Rome, where he served as the superior of Holy Cross International College from 1929 to 1934. Back here in De Pere, we were all gratified beyond measure to see an announcement in the National Catholic Welfare Conference News Service on Oct. 17, 1932, that our very own William Doheny had been named as a monsignor of the Roman Rota by the Holy Father himself, Pope Pius XI. Oh, the pride for our lad from SNC! I could have jumped for joy as I contemplated this stalwart former student of ours traveling to Rome to work with other great minds in the Vatican.

Doheny would later return to these United States where he worked at Our Lady of the Holy Cross in Dartmouth and Easton, Mass. He continued his academic presence with this significant appointment: He would go on to serve as the dean of the law school at the University of Notre Dame – a work of service in an eminent position for another esteemed institution and one for which, in 1971, we bestowed upon our notable alumnus an honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

*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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