



## ***DIOCESE OF RAPID CITY***

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### CHANCERY OFFICE

January 26, 2011

Greetings:

I am very pleased to write a letter of recommendation for The Abbey Group, Ltd.

As chancellor of the Catholic Diocese of Rapid City, South Dakota, I gained first hand knowledge of the work of Abbey Group early in 2008 when the diocese contracted with them for professional development services for a special appeal to raise \$12.5 million. To raise that amount in a mission diocese was a tall order given that the diocese encompasses three of the six poorest counties in the United States and is also home to five Indian reservations where poverty is rampant.

Initially, Michael McNeely, President and CEO of Abbey Group, took the time to get to know not only the needs of the diocese but also the priests and people within the diocese to enable him to develop a detailed road map to launch the appeal and ensure a successful outcome. My role in this process was to facilitate communication between Abbey Group and the diocesan staff involved in the appeal and to serve as secretary to the steering committee which was the bishop's cabinet for the appeal.

The success of this appeal, which actually exceeded the \$12.5 million goal, is a direct result of the generosity of the people of the diocese and the professionalism, competence and work ethic of the Abbey Group in carefully guiding the leadership through the appeal process. They conducted a feasibility study that set the parameters for developing a comprehensive plan that provided the mechanics of the entire appeal. Michael McNeely worked with, and was present to, the bishop and the leadership team throughout the three year span of the appeal. He provided training, motivation and support to those who graciously served as solicitors of major gifts in the quiet phase as well as to those who served during the public phase. Michael was with us every step of the way giving sound advice, smoothing out bumps in the road and offering follow-up strategies.

The Abbey Group gave us the courage and confidence to proceed with the appeal at a time when the economy was at its lowest level in years and the financial forecast for securing pledges was poor. The resulting over-goal achievement is testimony to the quality of service the Abbey Group, especially Michael McNeely as appeal counsel, brought to the table as the diocese pulled together to meet the goals of the appeal.

I have no hesitation in recommending The Abbey Group Ltd., as a competent, ethical and professional organization with a proven track record in the field of financial development.

Sincerely yours,

*Margaret S. Simonson*

Margaret S. Simonson  
Chancellor