‘Gift needs to be shared’

By Michael Brown
Editor

BOISE — “You have been given a gift and that gift needs to be shared,” Bishop Peter F. Christensen told the youths and adults gathered for the closing Mass March 8 at the Idaho Catholic Youth Convention in Bishop Kelly High School’s Carley Center.

They shouldn’t worry about trying to be perfect, but only in remaining open to allowing God to work through them. “God will use what you have and transform it” into what is needed to spread the Good News, the bishop said.

What matters is that “you have been touched by the Lord, and the Lord wants you to touch others,” said Bishop Christensen.

He told a story about a couple he saw as a young priest in St. Olaf Parish in St. Paul, where he was assigned after ordination. They wanted to be married in the church, but after filling out the pre-Cana survey, he had deep concerns. They were living together, and the man had just gotten out of prison. The young priest asked for each to come in separately, which the woman did, but the man refused to do. In subsequent meetings, he recalled, the woman said she was being abused by the man, and the young priest advised they call off the wedding.

A short time later, Bishop Christensen said, the woman moved out and the wedding was eventually cancelled. Five years later, following an Easter Mass, he was approached by the woman again who told him she was happily married with someone else and had started a family. “It was a story about death and resurrection following Easter Sunday Mass,” the bishop said.

However, the story doesn’t end there. During his recent visit to Pocatello for the Rite of Election, he was approached by this woman again, who with her husband moved to Idaho years ago. “I told her, ‘Do you know how many times I have thought of you? You are my favorite part of the priesthood,’” the bishop said.

He spoke to more than 1,650 youths and adults filling the Carley Center, a record number of registered participants. There was also a record number of bishops present, with Bishop Christensen joined by Bishop Liam Cary of Baker, Ore., and retired Boise Bishop Michael P. Driscoll.