

# Bay Minette pastor's interests fit well in south Alabama setting

By **CHRISTY MILLER**

Correspondent

While he is not originally from Baldwin County, the Rev. Ernie Hyndman is no stranger to south Alabama. After moving to Mobile with his family when he was only an infant, he was raised there and learned to appreciate two of south Alabama's most popular pastimes — fishing and football.

Since his appointment in 2007 as pastor of St. Agatha Catholic Church in Bay Minette, "Father Ernie" has been enjoying his favorite hobbies amidst the beauty of Baldwin County while also preaching and celebrating the sacraments with his new parish family.

Hyndman first felt a call toward the priesthood in elementary school at St. Dominic, and it remained with him through high school at McGill-

Toolen and at Spring Hill College, where he received degrees in English and philosophy. He continued to consider religious life and accepted a job with The Catholic Week newspaper, where he worked four years and eventually became editor.

"I wanted to have some other life experiences, but this attraction to the priesthood wouldn't leave me. When I finally thought about going in a different direction, I entered the seminary and started studying and growing spiritually," he said.

In 1990, Hyndman entered St. Joseph Seminary in St. Benedict, La., for two years, followed by four years of study at Notre Dame Seminary in

## Get to Know Ernie Hyndman



**Birthplace:** St. Claire Shores, Mich.

**Hometown:** Bay Minette

**Family:** Mother: Gloria; stepmother: Marianna; sister: Katrina; stepbrothers: Jimmy and Greg; stepsister: Sally

**Occupation:** Pastor, St. Agatha Catholic Church

**Activities:** Fishing and football

New Orleans. "During this time I learned what was really important was to live the life of a priest. It's a vocation just like marriage is a vocation," he said. "So after a lot of prayer and discernment, I decided this was where God was leading me. This was where I could find my purpose."

Although there are many aspects of religious life that he enjoys, Hyndman's favorite part of the job involves pastoral counseling.

"I enjoy being able to walk with people, share in their struggles and lead them to a closer relationship with God," he said. "I experience that most fully in personal encounters, such as confession, grief counseling, births, baptisms. You have the honor and joy of walking with them through

the most important moments of their life."

In his free time, Hyndman enjoys fishing and is an avid football fan, especially of the LSU Tigers.

"My dad was from New Orleans. I've always loved the Louisiana lifestyle and culture. Especially when I went to the seminary and got immersed in the Cajun culture, it just further deepened the great love affair I have with Louisiana," he said.

Hyndman is also passionate about people coming to know who God really is and not getting mired down in what religious people have told them God is.

"For me, there is a huge difference between religion and spirituality. Spirituality is a person's relationship with God. Religion is how a person chooses to get to the formal expression," he said. "The most important part of my role is providing religious experiences that can enhance and deepen a person's spirituality rather than get in the way of it."

Hyndman said he feels fortunate to be in a small parish where he can minister to his parishioners' needs.

"God has really blessed me in letting me enjoy the life I've always wanted. My goals are to continue to grow spiritually and to grow personally," he said.