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Philippines: Celebrating the Jubilee of St. Josemaria's 'Dies Natalis'

Highlights and sidelights of the
50th death anniversary of
Josemaria Escriva in the
Philippines

07/15/2025

MANILA, Philippines — Devotees of
Saint Josemaría Escrivá in the
Philippines marked the 50th death

anniversary of the founder of Opus Dei with feast day Masses, novenas, and other celebrations. In over 200 Masses held in major cities and remote towns in various parts of the country, the faithful were reminded of the saint's message of seeking holiness in ordinary life.

Up north in Cagayan province, the Archbishop of Tuguegarao, Ricardo Baccay, suggested that the feast day Mass be held at the cathedral instead of his residence so more people get to know St. Josemaria. The Metropolitan Cathedral of St. Peter was packed on June 25.

Deep south in Mindanao, Bishop Cerilo Allan U. Casicas of the diocese of Marbel in Koronadal celebrated Mass at the Christ the King Cathedral. Attendance over the years has been increasing, noted the bishop.

For devotees who organized and attended the celebrations, it was

their way of showing gratitude for favors received through Saint Josemaría's intercession.

A devotee's uncle was confined at the ICU of the Philippine Heart Center because of diabetes and a heart condition. On that day, a first class relic of Saint Josemaría was exposed at the EDSA Shrine, and the devotee—knowing the saint had suffered similar ailments—went there to appeal to St Josemaria to intercede for her uncle's cure. The uncle was discharged a week after. "I have other intentions entrusted to his intercession. This one has been heard by God," the devotee wrote.

In Pasig City, Bishop Mylo Hubert Vergara blessed newly-installed paintings of Saint Josemaría Escriva and Blessed Alvaro del Portillo at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral. The portraits by Pia Soriano-Gatdula are a moving testament of

thanksgiving and devotion.

Measuring 70cm x 137cm, the works were commissioned by Anjanette Decena.

Homilies at the various Masses reiterated St. Josemaria's reminder that holiness is for everyone.

Bishop Rufino Sescon, Jr. of Balanga, Bataan, in his homily said: "The opportunity to be holy, is found in everything. Even when we meet someone who's difficult we have to see in him someone who sanctifies us. I often remember this from St Josemaria."

Fr. Ryan Pasabilla, a diocesan priest at St Peter Parish: Shrine of Leaders in Quezon City, didn't know of Opus Dei and the founder until he was asked by parishioners to celebrate the feast day Mass. In his homily, he drew inspiration from the Gospel of putting new wine into new wineskins.

He said St. Josemaria is a “powerful example of someone who embraced the new wine of the Gospel and taught a new vision of holiness where ordinary work, and even our struggles can be transformed into vessels of grace.”

He added that to receive this “new wine of the Gospel, we ask for St. Escriva’s intercession to help us become new wineskins — joyful and generous, and ready for the new wine of Christ’s life to be poured in us.”

During this Jubilee Year, Bishop Oscar Florencio of the Military Ordinariate, who celebrated Mass at the Manila Cathedral, said we must be “pilgrims of hope” amid the different challenges of war, famine, calamities and evil.

He ended his homily with a prayer to St Josemaria: “Help us to seek holiness in our tasks, embrace the

cross with love, and to trust that everything offered to God is worthwhile. Pray for all of us that we may live fully with joy, serve with generosity and journey faithfully with Christ each day that we may be with you someday in heaven.”

Saint Josemaría died on June 26, 1975, in Rome. Canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2002, the Founder of Opus Dei taught that holiness is not reserved for a few, but is possible for all, in daily work, family life, and ordinary circumstances.

To report a favor received through his intercession, e-mail ocs.ph@opusdei.org or visit www.opusdei.org/en-ph/favor/saint-josemaria/

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(02/21/2026)