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# **Fiesta in 3 Saint Josemaria Escriva Parishes in the Philippines**

June 26 is fiesta time in 3 parish communities in Tarlac, Catanduanes, and Leyte (Philippines) celebrating their patron, Saint Josemaria Escriva.

06/24/2024

On February 23, 2024, Archbishop John Forrosuelo Du of Palo (Leyte) elevated to a parish the Mission Station of San Josemaria Escriva in

Barrio Apitong, Tacloban. It is the third parish of St. Josemaria to be established in the Philippines.

The Diocesan Shrine of San Josemaria Escriva in Gerona (Tarlac) has the distinction of being the first parish in the Philippines and in Asia named after the founder of Opus Dei.

### **Parish in Obo, Catanduanes**

Perhaps unknown to many is the second Saint Josemaria parish in the country. It is located in Barangay Obo in the municipality of San Miguel (Catanduanes).

In 2014, Bishop Manolo de los Santos of Catanduanes, eager to rekindle the faith in this riverside town, decided to establish a mission station in Obo. He wanted a modern saint to be its patron. Between St John XXIII and St Josemaria Escriva, the local faithful chose St Josemaria, as he was more

closely associated with the town's original patron, Saint Joseph.

It took some years to build the church. It was completed through the combined efforts of the local residents, generous families, the association of Obonhon in Manila, and members of Opus Dei and other Catholic organizations.

On June 26, 2021 the bishop declared the former mission station as the Saint Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer Parish, the second in the Philippines and in Asia.

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## **Parish in Apitong, Leyte**

On January 22, 2006 Bishop Pedro Dean of Palo established the community of Apitong in Abucay, Tacloban City as a mission station with St. Josemaria Escriva as its titular patron.

Through the years, the chapel has been upgraded through the efforts of the local community and benefactors. Religious fervor in the community experienced continued growth, with the active participation of lay faithful. The mission station had daily Masses and three Masses on Sundays. With time, more sacraments were celebrated.

Every year on June 26, the mission station would have a special celebration on the feast day of its titular patron saint. In recent years Solemn Masses were celebrated, as the church facilities and structures allowed.

In February of this year, Archbishop Du of Palo saw that it was ripe to establish the mission station as the Saint Josemaria Escriva Parish in Tacloban, Leyte.

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## **Parish in Magaspac, Tarlac**

Bishop Florentino Cinense of Tarlac canonically established the Parokya ni San Josemaria Escriva on February 24, 2003. It comprises 9 agricultural sitios and barangays in the town of Gerona.

Built through the work of the local community and families from Tarlac, the church was completed in 2014. And as expressed by Bishop Cinense in the groundbreaking ceremonies in 2005, it is a “showcase and the model for all the churches to be constructed in the diocese of Tarlac in the future. That is why I wanted it to be here by the main highway,” the bishop said. “This church will be truly a work of God, Opus Dei, where one will be inspired to pray.”

The church was designed by the late Rev. Father Alex Bautista, who was a professional architect before being ordained priest. It has many unique

details, among them a drive-thru area where one can visit the Blessed Sacrament while staying inside the car. The church is a popular wedding venue in Tarlac.

Bishop Cinense elevated the parish to a Diocesan Shrine on February 14, 2014.

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## **June 26 Fiesta**

It is fiesta time every June 26 in this community in Gerona, Tarlac.

Novena Masses and processions are held to celebrate their patron saint, San Josemaria Escriva.

It is similarly a joyful town fiesta in Barrio Apitong in Tacloban (Leyte) and Barrio Obo in the municipality of San Miguel (Catanduanes).

“As a young worker in an environment which often tests my

personal and Christian values, St. Josemaria Escriva is my daily reminder that my work should be offered to God and therefore I should do it religiously and give the best that I can,” said Obo youth leader Rhea Morales. “My work – ordinary and routinary as it seems - is a way of honoring God who gave me the work that I have right now,” she shared, explaining the message of Saint Josemaria that we are all called to be saints in our daily activities.

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