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## **Parish of Saint Josemaria Escriva in Gerona (Tarlac) now a diocesan shrine**

One of the architectural features of the diocesan shrine of St. Josemaria Escriva in Tarlac is a window at the back of the Church which allows motorists to view the Blessed Sacrament without leaving their car.

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Tarlac Bishop Florentino Cinense recently decreed that the parish of St. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer in Gerona town be a diocesan shrine.

Cinense promulgated the decree on Feb. 14 before some 2,000 people at the completed church along MacArthur National Highway in Gerona. Its architect is Fr. Alex Bautista, Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines consultant for church renovations and a professor at the College of Architecture of the University of Santo Tomas. He had worked in Hong Kong and China as an architect before entering the priesthood.

Bishop Cinense established the parish in February 2003. It consists of six barrios and sitios. “Many of the inhabitants here are farmers and they could not give much of what they have [materially]; but what they do have in abundance is work,” the

bishop said, about the development of the church through the years.

And so, from temporary facilities in the Barangay Magaspac Hall in 2003, it has now become “one of the most aesthetically notable churches in the diocese of Tarlac,” Bishop Cinense added.

Concelebrating with Bishop Cinense were Bishop Jack Jose of Urdaneta, Pangasinan; Bishop Roberto Mallari of San Jose, Nueva Ecija; Msgr. Carlos Estrada, regional vicar of Opus Dei in the Philippines, and 40 other priests from the diocese of Tarlac.

## **Blessed Sacrament**

The church features a revolutionary concept—what Father Bautista calls a “drive-through” visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

The back of the main tabernacle of the church has a glass window,

making it visible from the driveway running through the back of the church. “From the highway, you can go around and stop at the back of this tabernacle, and you can visit without leaving your car,” said Fr. Bautista.

Bishop Cinense invited motorists to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

Josephine Darang // Philippine Daily Inquirer

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