

## • Cover Story •

**T**HAT MAN with the penetrating granite eyes is gone now. That man to whose prudence and untiring energy USC owes much of its progress is not with us anymore. For, that man who had been our friend and Superior for so many years is now miles away from us. Funny how time can rob us so easily of our most cherished possessions; how it can ruthlessly take away from us the things we have learned to love so much, things which have almost become a part of us. What makes us mad about it all is that we cannot even lift so much as a feeble finger against it. What it wants, it takes away. And there's nothing we can do about it.

Yes. Time can be ruthless. But it can have a heart, too. While it saddens us one moment, it gladdens us the next. And while it cheated

smile told us we need not worry about short tempers, the nasty summer heat, or anything of that sort. It had been like that ever since

to himself than to us, "I don't intend to flatter you but I must say I'm impressed to find more than six thousand eager students all coming here to gain knowledge with the hope and expectation that the University of San Carlos would impart this knowledge which would serve as a guidance for a future life."

"And the faculty?" we pressed further.

"What strikes me as very impressive is the ready and pleasant cooperation shown by the faculty

# USC's Newest Friend:

us of the Very Rev. Fr. Albert van Gansewinkel, it brought us a new friend in the person of the Very Rev. Fr. Herman Kondring.

He had just finished a class in religion when we went to see him. But hardly had he stepped out of the classroom when someone, presumably a visitor who had been waiting for him outside, approached him and talked to him at length on some matters. There were still many others waiting for him at his office. Were we lucky to get there first!

To be pestered every single second with work, work, and more work, leaving you scarcely a moment to catch your breath, is terrible enough. Enough, that is, to change a man into a twitching bundle of nerves. Add that to the oppressive heat of a July afternoon. And you can imagine the worst for yourselves.

At least this is what we thought when, half-hesitating, we pushed the door to his office. Yet, the next sixty minutes were to prove how wrong we were! There was Rev. Fr. Kondring — beaming with unfeigned pleasure and looking as if he didn't have care at all in the world. One look at his huge warm

he assumed his duties here. Always, there was some letter to attend to, some visitor to be received, some speech or message to be delivered. All sorts of things and sundry literally kept popping up every minute, matters directly connected with his office as Rector of USC. Still, Rev. Fr. Kondring manages to keep a smile through it all. In a way, this was how he expected it. Having been in Cebu so many times before, he knew, more or less, what a grinding task there was ahead of him.

"Of course," he says, "the very first days were strenuously trying. Things were happening so fast I was scarcely able to keep up with them. But," he adds happily, "I always have a few hours to myself in my room." This last phrase, however, must not be taken to mean dozing off or doing nothing; most likely, Fr. Kondring uses those "few hours" on philosophical meditations, his main interest being philosophy and Dogmatic Theology.

"What do you think of our students here, Father?" we somehow managed to blurt out, but not without feeling a little seedy inside.

"Well, now," he chuckled, more

members from the very start."

Coming from another man, these answers may sound so matter-of-factly phrased as to make one doubt their sincerity. Coming from Fr. Kondring, there could be no room for such a doubt. Such a doubt would even seem unfair. Listening to that rich, husky voice while he talked and looking at that huge warm smile which could only radiate from a vibrant personality, one cannot but conclude that he really meant every word he said.

What we have said so far is just a tiny portion of the picture that is Fr. Kondring. We shall have to go back to the very beginning of our story to have the entire picture of the man — if we hope to know him better and admire him as he really is.

Rev. Fr. Herman Kondring was born in 1899 in Western Germany. Immediately after his ordination as priest at St. Gabriel's in Vienna, Austria, he was sent to the Philippines. That was on October 17, 1926. He has stayed here for almost thirty years now. And in all that time he has gone abroad only on one occasion. That was when he attended the General Chapter of

As interviewed by  
LEDINILA AMIGABLE, Staff Member

the S.V.D. in Rome to represent the Philippine province in 1947-1948.

During all those twenty-nine years Fr. Kondring has served the Church and the Divine Word Society in the Philippines, most of the time in responsible and leading positions. He has been the Rector of the Major Seminary in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, and of the central house of the Philippines S.V.D., Christ the King Seminary, Quezon City. And not only that, he has also been the Provincial Superior of the Society of the Divine Word in the

goodness devotion to duty are excellent qualifications for his new office. As Rector of the University of San Carlos he succeeds the Very Rev. Fr. Albert van Gansewinkel who has been appointed Director of St. Paul College, Tacloban City.

When asked what his reaction was upon learning of his appointment here, he replied in a voice that was tinged with unpretended humility, "On the one hand, I felt a kind of apprehension whether I would be able to fulfill the hopes of my superiors and live up to their



Very Rev. H. Kondring, S.V.D.  
...no string of degrees...

## Very Rev. Herman Kondring, S.V.D.

Philippines.

In all these jobs Fr. Kondring managed admirably well. However, this is not surprising. From a man who puts not only all of his energy, talents, resources, and the best of what he has into his work but also his heart and soul, you can not expect anything else. Such a man can never fail; he can only succeed. More especially so when this "best of what he has" is coupled with an unshakable faith in Him Who helps "those who help themselves."

In Fr. Kondring the devotion to duty is so deeply sincere and zealous that it prompted him to acquire the Philippine citizenship in 1940. To spend the rest of his life here in the Philippines is, in his own words, "in keeping with my priestly vocation. Besides, it is one more way of identifying myself with the people among whom I have been working and whom I have learned to love."

His twenty-nine-year stay in the Philippines has made Fr. Kondring quite well acquainted with the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of the country. This fact, his former positions, as well as his honest-to-

expectations. On the other hand, however," he emphasized, "I realized it was a real challenge to do my very best and use the talent I have gained from experience to the fullest advantage."

Barely three months have passed since Fr. Kondring assumed office. And already, he is bursting with ideas for our good ole' USC. He made it clear, though, that on the whole he is "very satisfied with the progress USC has already made." Nevertheless, there are a couple of plans which he intends to carry out as soon as he can, plans which had been under consideration of the school administration for the past years. Among others, the plans include the building of a new boys' high school somewhere near Lahug, with ample grounds for sports (wait 'till the boys hear this!) and possibly, for the accommodation of boarders; the extension of the graduate school, and finally, the opening of the college of medicine.

Earlier before we happened to ask Fr. Kondring about his academic attainments, to which he obligingly replied, "I don't have a string of degrees to boast of. All I

have to my name is only a Master's degree in Education which I got from the University of Santo Tomas. That is why," he humbly adds, "I sometimes protest against being made to handle big responsibilities."

But what's a string of degrees compared to a wealth of experience? What's a diploma compared with a will to do? It undoubtedly takes much more to accomplish an end, to bring plans from paper to reality. It takes much more than just know-how or know-what, but of things not found in a sheepskin, things like guts, or "stainless steel insides," an outstanding personality, and above all, that kind of faith which long ago was said to have "moved mountains" — and Fr. Kondring has all these. So, then, it would not be just pure optimism to say that this kindly, devoted servant of God will succeed in his plans. In God's own good time, he will. We have only to wait and see.

We asked him for his picture before we left. At this Fr. Kondring grinned. "You can have it," he said. "But I warn you — I'm not photogenic!"

Somehow, we thought we saw an impish gleam in his eyes. ‡