An innovative new project, the Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) pilot program, soon will be helping the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit prepare for the entire range of challenges presented by mission work.

The program is scheduled to launch its pilot phase in August 2010 in Africa, using Spiritans based in Zimbabwe to test its effectiveness. By August 2011, the plan is for the program to be open to any and all persons doing mission work, regardless of their affiliation.

Since their founding more than 300 years ago, Spiritans have been community builders. Today, with missions in more than 60 countries, often in lands devastated by war, poverty and systemic injustice, Spiritans need the skills to strengthen communities more than ever.

The Rev. John Kilcrann, C.S.Sp., a fellow of Duquesne’s Center for the Study of Catholic Social Thought, who is leading the effort to develop the JPIC program, says that, worldwide, approximately 900 Spiritans are in formation, the term used to describe the educational preparation for their life’s work. These Spiritans receive an excellent education, especially in the area of theology, which equips them intellectually for mission work, but formation programs could also benefit from including academic subjects such as economics, sociology, anthropology and political science, and the JPIC plans to offer courses in these areas.

According to Fr. Kilcrann, these Spiritans must also be prepared to work where strife, deprivation and the threat of violence hobble missionary efforts at every turn. Getting them prepared in this way, he says, has been a Spiritan concern since the 1980s.

Evan Stoddard, associate dean of the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts, who has worked closely with Fr. Kilcrann to organize campus resources for the pilot phase of the program, saw a good fit between JPIC program goals and the McAnulty College’s strengths.

“Here in the college, [the JPIC program] resonated with us and seemed like something we should be involved with,” says Stoddard.

The idea to have more extensive training for missionaries arose in Rome at the highest levels of the Congregation, but the planning and development of the JPIC program has taken place at Duquesne.

The program will rely on talent and expertise from across campus to create distance-learning lessons. Fr. Kilcrann says that his first look at Duquesne convinced him that the University’s faculty strengths, its capacity to implement Web-related technologies in pursuit of learning goals and the Gumberg Library, with its integrated conventional and digital resources, would be essential for the initiative’s success. Fr. Kilcrann relied on the Duquesne Spiritans as well as advice and orientation from various deans at Duquesne to help him choose faculty members for a planning team, which has been at work on the project since August 2009, and for creating course work.

The pilot program will launch in August 2010. Though all of the course work will be accessible online, electrical power and Internet connectivity in some African regions are unreliable, so the program modules also will be distributed on DVDs. The pilot will be tested on two groups of about 20 students each.
Tanzanian Bishop Visits Duquesne

Tanzanian Bishop Augustine Ndeliakyama Shao, C.S.Sp., traveled to Duquesne during Founders Week in February to address the University community on the work of the Spiritans in his diocese of Zanzibar and Pemba, where the congregation has had a presence for 150 years. Shao, who was consecrated Bishop of Zanzibar in 1997, is also a member of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. He believes creating a harmonious relationship between the country’s 11,000 Christians and 1 million Muslims is a crucial factor in addressing issues of social justice, education and health care that affect all Tanzanians.

“While we struggle to build our schools and dispensaries and to carry out related social services, we are called to live our faith openly, express our hope confidently, and show forth our love in the care we have for our neighbor, our society and our environment,” stated Shao. “In that witnessing, sharing and dialogue we can build together with our Muslim brothers and sisters a new Zanzibar, a new Tanzania, a new Africa, a new world.”

Shao’s graduate studies at Duquesne were interrupted twice by a call to religious service—first, in 1990, as Provincial Superior of the East African Province and then as Bishop of Zanzibar and Pemba. The bishop received an Honorary Doctorate Degree of Pastoral Leadership from Duquesne following his Founders Week presentation.