San Marco Project Group Has Audience With Pope

Milton Green, LTV Astronautics program director for the Scout rocket, and Ken Jacobs, project engineer, were among a select group of U.S. and Italian space scientists recently commended by Pope Paul VI for their international cooperation in the Italian San Marco space project.

The San Marco program includes launching of a scientific satellite by Italy, using a Scout rocket. The launch will be made from a sea-going pier anchored in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Africa later this year.

Pope Paul received several officials of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, key members of the Italian Space Commission, and the LTV Astronautics representatives in the Vatican Throne Room.

"We praise this example of international cooperation for the progress of science and the peaceful uses of energy," Pope Paul said before bestowing his blessing. "You are discovering the laws the Lord of Creation established and employing the forces He placed in nature."

Ken Jacob's recollections of the meeting with Pope Paul follow:

By KEN JACOBS

Occasionally during your lifetime an event occurs that leaves a lasting impression on your mind. Such an event happened to me during a recent business trip to Rome, Italy.

As most of you know LTV is under contract to NASA to provide the Scout launch vehicle for the San Marco program.

During the course of required integration and coordination work associated with this launch, it became necessary to attend a series of meetings in Rome. Our host for these meetings was the Italian Space Commission. On the morning of this first meeting Prof. Luigi Broglio, president of the I.S.C., informed us that arrangements had been made for the visiting American team to have a private audience with His Holiness Pope Paul VI.

Arrangements were to meet Professor Broglio and five or six of the Italian engineers the following morning in front of St. Peter's Basilica in the Piazza S. Pietro. The morning meeting with our host was set for 11:30 but all the Americans were so anxious not to be late that I think we arrived about one half hour early.

The meeting was to take place in the Apostolic Palace located adjacent to the Basilica. The official entrance was through the 10-to-12-foot high Bronze Gate in the right arm of the Columnade. We climbed the stairs to the gate, guarded by Swiss guards in very colorful uniforms. From the gate, we reached the Portico of Constantine and the Scala Regia.

By the Pius IX Stairs, on the right, we reached the Courtyard of St. Damasus. Thence, the Papal Stairs lead to the Clementine Hall with paintings of the Exploits of San Clemente. We passed through a total of 14 rooms on our walk. From the Clementine Hall, through a series of other halls (Hall of the Swiss, of the Tapestries, of the Throne) we arrived at the Small Throne Room adjacent to the Pope's office. The Small Throne Room was only about 20 x 30 feet in size and the meeting was to take place here, but don't ask me what was on the walls, since at this point I was too excited to look.

After we waited about five minutes the Pope entered the room and shook hands with everyone present, after which he read a prepared statement, in English and Italian, commending the joint American/Italian effort in the San Marco Space Program. Warren Guild of NASA then presented Pope Paul with a large lavishly bound book of photos depicting the Scout San Marco launch from Wallops Island, Virginia, in December of 1964. Professor Broglio was presented with a large silver medal by the Pope, after which he presented each of those attending, a small bronze medal in commemoration of our visit. At this point the Vatican photographer arrived, attired in courtly splendor, and took a group photo.

Thus ended an interview which I am sure was the high point of this, or any other trip to Rome.