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# Socks pope wears now available online

Sara Angle  Catholic News Service  | Mar. 10, 2011

**ROME** -- Audrey Hepburn had Hubert Givenchy, Rita Hayworth had Jean Louis, Michelle Obama has Jason Wu and the pope has the Gammarellis.

From their little shop in Rome, the Gammarelli family has been outfitting popes, as well as cardinals, bishops and priests since 1798.

Now, "Mes Chaussettes Rouges" (My Red Socks), a Paris-based online retailer, is offering a tiny piece of Gammarelli style to the general public.

"I first saw the red socks in the early '90s on the French prime minister, Edouard Balladur, and thought it was very amusing, but I found out that the Gammarelli socks were only available in Rome," said Vincent Metzger, the proprietor of "Mes Chaussettes Rouges."

Metzger and a friend created the business initially by purchasing a bulk quantity of socks from Gammarelli and selling them to friends in the summer of 2009.

They saw a business opportunity, Metzger told Catholic News Service. "We went to Rome again and stayed there for three nights for negotiations, and we made a contract," he said.

Other than the Gammarelli shop behind the Pantheon in Rome, he said, "Mes Chaussettes Rouges" is the only licensed retailer of Gammarelli products.

He claimed the Gammarelli socks are now worn by French Prime Minister Francois Fillon, "which I think is very funny. He buys them on our website," Metzger said.

Gammarelli socks are "the best quality, because they are made with long fibered cotton, making them more solid." And because the seam is done by hand on the sides of the foot rather than machine sewn at the toe, Metzger said he thinks they are much more comfortable.

Gammarelli socks are designed as religious clothing, so they are available only in cardinal red, bishop purple and priest black. The pope wears white socks, but "Mes Chaussettes Rouges" only offers white upon special request.

"Mes Chaussettes Rouges" targets a particular kind of customer -- what they call "The Gammarelli Man" -- who, according to the website, is someone who possesses true virtue in all things and appreciates the little things in life.

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