

HOW MUCH DO PAPAL SHOES COST?

22/02/2008

Few people are able to work directly in the service of Popes. But one man is lucky enough to do so: Adriano Stefanelli.

A shoemaker and entrepreneur from northern Italy, he travels to Rome twice a year to present his handiwork to the Pope.

“It all started during the Via Crucis of 2003 with John Paul II,” says Stefanelli. “He was very ill, and I was really moved. I wondered what could I do to alleviate his pain. And since I can make shoes, I thought the only thing I could do was make a pair for him.”

Mr Stefanelli’s expertise has since been passed to his successor, and always the shoes are in their traditional papal colour: papal red.

“When they wanted to order a new pair, so his secretary wrote to me saying that the Pope had a 42 shoe size and he didn’t have any particular problem with his feet. So I made one pair for a normal foot of that size,” says Stefanelli.

These shoes have since been declared “accessory of the year” by the US magazine “Esquire”. That led to the legend that Pope Benedict wears shoes made by Prada - a legend the Vatican denied in an article in the German magazine “Stern”. Since then, Stefanelli’s name has become known. Now he has just made the Pope a new model of shoes, with a small variation.

“This kind of red is called ruby red, almost Bordeaux,” says Stefanelli. “And I put the acronym of Benedict XVI here as you can see. The initials are small, they are not lurid at all, and they make the shoes more personal... I hope that the Pope will like them.”

Stefanelli owns a shoe-shop in Novara and only in his spare time makes shoes. In his workshop he has also created football boots for Cardinal Bertone. He says it’s a homage to the “Captain” of the Vatican’s national football team. Stefanelli is following his father’s tradition: every pair of shoes is sewed by hand. That’s why making them can take one month.

“When I was a child and people would ask me what I wanted to do when I grew up, and I used to answer: I’d like to make the Pope’s shoes”, says Stefanelli. “ And today it seems to me I have realized my childhood dream.”

The commercial value of these shoes and slippers is around 400 Euro for each pair. But having such a recommendation, they are obviously given for free... Sometimes personal satisfaction is more important than business.

Video of an interview with Mr Stefanelli 2’ 30’’ Ref: NEW-080222-03

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