

# Queen of Russia, Queen of Peace

By Julia Pearson, SFO  
Human Interest Editor



Fr. Charles Shelton, Second to left with fellow friars in  
Moscow, Russia on December 31, 1991

*"It was a Lady dressed all in white, more brilliant than the sun, shedding rays of light clearer and stronger than a crystal glass filled with the most sparkling water and pierced by the burning rays of the sun." Description of Mary by the young Fatima visionaries.*

The appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to three child visionaries in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917, is believed to be the greatest of the twentieth-century apparitions of Our Holy Mother. Impacting the faith of millions during turbulent world events, Fatima even reached forward through the years to the last decade in Russia. *The first secret of Fatima was the vision of hell, and the second secret was the revelation of the importance of devotion to the Immaculate Heart. The third secret foretold the consecration of Russia and the world to the Immaculate Heart.*

Roy Abraham Varghese, [God-Sent: A History of the Accredited Apparitions of Mary](#). New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000.

On Christmas Day, 1991, the Kremlin saw Mikhail Gorbachev replaced by Boris Yeltsin. Several days later, during this holy Christmas season on New

Year's Eve, the flag of the Soviet Union was lowered for the last time and the Federation flag took its place and continues to fly to this day. Embracing our Holy Mother as the ambassador of reconciliation between God and His people, Father Charles Shelton, OFM Conv, came to Red Square on the night of the fall of the Soviet Union. As the new era of a free Russia emerged from eighty-five years under Soviet rule at mid-night, Father Shelton crowned the Blessed Mother using a statue of Our Lady of Fatima in front of Lenin's Tomb. Father remembers this event as one of the most precious in his lifetime. Dressed in his Franciscan habit and warm overcoat, the beloved miraculous medal close to his heart, he stood in the frigid square, which had been swept clean of snow. It was 20-30 degrees below zero, with a wind chill making it feel like 50 degrees below. Fireworks in the black, inky sky reflected the white of the garments on the four-foot statue to a luminous sheen. In the backdrop of the tomb, KGB soldiers in dark, green-gray coats marched in the identifiable high, straight-legged fashion.

After the ceremonial changing of the guards and the air stilled of the fireworks, thousands of her Russian children filed past Our Lady. Behind the statue stood Father Shelton, witnessing the respectful hand of his history, as the Queen of Peace and the Queen of Russia were one. He remembers a particular old grandmother, her face wrinkled, wise, and gentle, with a babushka covering her head against the bitter night air. Grandmother looked at the statue and then directly into Father Shelton's face, her own face transformed by wonderment and awe. At that moment, the fear that had been his constant companion since arriving in Moscow was now gone. As the Russian grandmother passed by, Father Shelton said, "I knew my job was done." The knowledge that the image of the Holy Mother would bring comfort to the people of the former Soviet Union was secure in his heart. It is unfortunate that the mass media did not report or record this event.

Father Shelton made his solemn profession, as a Franciscan friar, in 1979. He became a deacon in 1980, and was ordained a priest by Bishop John Cummings at St. Elizabeth's in Oakland, California, on June 7, 1981. He received an undergraduate degree in psychology. His education also includes a Master of Divinity degree from the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley. Father Shelton lives at the St. Joseph of Cupertino Friary in Arroyo Grande, CA.