# December 2

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**Jan Ruysbroeck** (1293-1381) priest

On December 2, 1381 Jan Ruysbroeck, a canon regular of St. Gudula's church in Brussels and a monk of Groenendael, died at the age of eighty-eight.

Born in the village of Ruysbroeck, near Brussels, Jan received an excellent education without attending any of the universities of his time. He had little interest in speculative scholastic theology, and preferred the inquiry proper to spiritual experience and the psychology of the inner life to abstract discussions on God and the human soul. His assiduous reading of Scripture and the Church fathers, together with his strong attachment to human realities, allowed him to produce mystical writings consonant with the Gospel.

Jan was ordained a priest in 1317 and spent twenty-six years as a canon in Brussels, encouraging his parishioners to deepen their spiritual lives and writing spiritual works of timeless value for them, such as his masterpiece The Spiritual Wedding.

When the exuberance of fanatical preachers and the growing decadence of the clergy made life in the city intolerable, Jan left Brussels and settled in Groenendael, in the Belgian countryside. There he pursued a life of poverty and prayer with five companions, carried out an intensive ministry of spiritual counsel, and wrote other valuable works.

His experience of life on the outskirts of society, where he sought to meet God in prayer and welcome the constant newness that accompanies every believer's relationship of love with God, was one of the main sources of inspiration for the devotio moderna movement.

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**Philaret of Moscow** (1782-1867) pastor

On November 19 in the old calendar, which corresponds to December 2 in the Gregorian calendar, the Russian church commemorates Philaret, metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna. His episcopal ministry in Moscow, which lasted almost fifty years, made him perhaps the most popular of all Russian bishops.

Basil Michailovich Drozdov was born in Kolomna, near Moscow, in 1782. At a young age he began to display the gift for which he is still remembered: an exceptional talent for preaching the Gospel.

Basil studied at the Trinity - St. Sergius Lavra and made his monastic vows, taking the name of Philaret in memory of St. Philaret the Merciful. He became an instructor in Hebrew, poetry, and church history. As professor and rector, he attempted to change the language of religious instruction from Latin back to Russian. The Russian language edition of the Bible certainly would not have seen the light without the efforts of Philaret, who was determined to lead all believers to the living waters of Scripture. He encouraged the translation not only of the Bible, but also of the writings of the Church fathers into modern Russian.

Philaret was elected bishop of Ravel'sk in 1817, but was transferred several times, moving to Tver', to Jaroslavl,' and finally to Moscow in 1821. In Moscow he restructured every aspect of the life of the diocese, and composed a Christian catechism that is still used today as a textbook in Russian religious schools. During conferences and liturgical celebrations, he lost no occasion to deliver sermons that were both eloquent and accessible to listeners. At the end of his life, his homelies were assembled and published in several volumes, which have yet to be translated into the various Western languages.

Philaret died in 1867 after celebrating the Divine Liturgy and receiving many visitors, as had always been his custom.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Heb 7:26-8,2; Jn 10:9-16

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THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (23 hatur/hedar):
*Cornelius the Centurion* (1st cent.; Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
*Jan Ruysbroeck*, spiritual father in Netherlands

MARONITES:
*Habakkuk* (7th cent. BC), prophet

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
*Habakkuk*, prophet
*Philaret*, metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna (Russian Church)
*Ilarion the Georgian* (d. ca. 875), monk (Georgian Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:
*Lucius* (d. ca. 200), bishop and martyr