May 8th: Memorial of Our Lady of Luján, Patroness of Argentina

Gospel text (*Jn* 19:25-27): Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your Mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

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Rev. D. Martín DOLZANI, ssp
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Today we recall the history of the Virgin of Luján, which is very original, as are those of other Marian centers: Guadalupe, Fatima, Lourdes, etc., where the words of the Gospel resound loudly "'Behold, your mother'...And the disciple took her into his home," for it could be said that, as Mother, Mary chose the place to stay and her children received her with filial devotion.

We are talking about 1630. It all begins when Antonio Farías de Sá commissioned in Pernambuco (Brazil) an image of the "Immaculate Conception" for the chapel of his estate, in Sumampa.

When the image arrived in Argentina, it was loaded onto a cart, transported by oxen. On the way, in the area where the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Luján is located today (Province of Buenos Aires), the cart would no longer move forward or backward. It only started moving again when they removed the crate that carried the image. Those present interpreted that the Virgin wanted to stay there.

Another surprising fact is that the first caretaker of the image was an African slave, Manuel Costa de los Ríos (brought as such, from Brazil), who was, in addition to being a witness to the miracle, the one who "received her into his home." He is currently in the cause for beatification for his faith and enthusiasm in presenting the Mother of God to pilgrims.

In 2030, the Church in Argentina is preparing to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the miracle, under the motto "María de Luján, hope of our people." The Mother of God remained in the heart of the Argentine people, taking the name of the chosen place: the Luján River, so that from there She could look with love and closeness at her children and be a reason for faith and hope, as Pope Francis invites us: "Let yourselves be looked at once more by Her, with that motherly gaze that renews you, cares for you, gives you strength".