

Pretty in Pink, with Vultures
May 1st, 2026

On my recent trip I had a 10 hour layover in Panama City. I took advantage of this to visit the old city and enjoy the lovely Spanish colonial architecture. I was visiting the cathedral and caught a picture of a black vulture perched on the cathedral with an effulgence of pink ipe blossoms in the foreground. At first it was just an opportune photo: cathedral, vulture and cherry-ish blossom. But it struck me as symbolic of our post-Easter life together.



Cathedrals and spring cherry blossoms are wonderfully Easter-y. We bask in the post resurrection glow of Jesus rising for our glorification in him. And bask we should! There is more than enough darkness in the world and Easter, the liturgical season in which we are in, is an invitation to, as the liturgy says: “lift up your hearts!”

“Lifting up one’s heart” is not just an act of spiritual courage. It might seem to be akin to that most American of proverbs “to lift one’s self up by one’s bootstraps.” The point of it, which sometimes get lost in the telling, is not self improvement through individual effort. The phrase points to the impossibility of the physics of it all: you cannot elevate yourself by pick one’s self up by pulling on one’s laces: it is impossible by all rules of physics.

To “lift up one’s heart” may be an equal contradiction of physics: our hearts are firmly embedded in our chests and there they should remain less we perish. The liturgical invitation is embedded in Easter: what is medically inadvisable is in fact accomplished by grace. It is God’s gift the lifts up our hearts. It is exactly the thing that a God who raises the Son from the dead would do.

Yet, even in Eastertide vultures still circle. I have been struck by comments by Pope Leo. He has reminded the world of what John Paul II talked about as a “culture of death” that Christians must meet with a “culture of life”. The world has grown darker. There are wars and rumors of war abroad and the world is contemplating how it can spend billions and trillions of dollars more on armaments to prepare for war. There is an infernal logic that says if you want peace, you should prepare for war. Saying out loud that perhaps we should be conspiring together how to embrace life sounds hopelessly naive.

If you think that sounds naive, you should try Jesus.”For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” Christ is risen. The pink cherries blossom. Vultures circle. We pray, believe and hope, that God will scatter the vultures, for God wants to wage life in the world, and in our hearts.

By the grace of God we will have our hearts lifted up, not matter what vultures might be circling. And indeed, that is the best reason to see you this Sunday, because the gift of the Church is a home for hearts rising. See you Sunday!

And speaking of hearts rising, please join us for Dinner Church on Saturday May 9th at St. Luke's at 5:00 pm. Bring a friend!