I would love to name a cat – Magnifi, in honour of the Magnificat! I read recently the National Geographic edition about Mary (Dec 2015).

Our parish held Advent Discussion Groups and we realised there were two types of information in New Testament regarding Jesus’ birth: what happened, and what it means.

First mainly covered by Matthew and Luke; latter in John (gospel and letters) and Paul. Both important.

Easy to get carried away by the former – Nativity stories. Sometimes a new twist required – Innkeeper, Mayor, Angel, even Pantomime. So it is easy to forget the purpose by concentrating on the story.

Mary recognises this and declares God’s manifesto, ie God’s purpose:

* Mercy to those who honour God
* Scattering the proud and their plans
* Humbling the mighty and lifting the lowly.
* Filling the hungry and denying the rich.

Compare this with Hannah – 1 Sam 2.1-10 – similar yet different.

Overall Jesus comes to invert situations: Jesus in Temple as boy (Luke 2.47), and adult (Luke 19.45ff)

Cf Paul 1 Corinthians 1.25, 2 Corinthians 12.10; 1 Peter 2.7b; John 1.46 (Nathaniel).

Two things:

What are our strengths? Individually and as a parish? (eg Affordables, welcome, choir, building)
Will Christ invert these?

What are our weaknesses? Individually and as a parish? (eg Ageing congregation, finances, contact with community)

Will Christ invert these into true strength?

We have an advantage in NZ! We are used to Christmas being ‘wrong’ eg Carol our Christmas, an upside down Christmas. May God help us to see things from his point of view this Christmas and always.