



# ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

26 October 2011

## To Hindu Friends and Colleagues

I wish you a very joyful Diwali. As you celebrate, I hope you are all enjoying precious time with your families and friends. The idea of the return home is central to the Ramayana as it is in many religious scriptures. Often the stories do not place emphasis on returning home to a specific place, but instead on the believer returning to God and finding a home in God. In the Bhagavadgita, *bhakti* is the way that the believer enters a shelter in God and attains 'the supreme abode'. In the New Testament, Christ says: 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.' In Hindu and Christian mystical texts different passages speak of homecoming as a matter of communion and relationship with God, while others present it as a luminous experience in which God and Self merge into one. I hope that through reading these different passages together in Hindu and Christian dialogue we can find a basis from which to work together as communities and develop greater understanding of the nature of God and of what it means to dwell with and in him.

This time last year, I was very pleased to attend a meeting chaired by Professor Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad in Bangalore with Swamis from Sri Vaishanava, Dvaita, Lingayat, Rama Krishna and Dasanami movements. The following February, a similar gathering was convened here at Lambeth Palace to reflect on progress made in Hindu Christian dialogue in the UK. Dr. Jessica Frazier from the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies spoke about her national research project 'Bridges and Barriers to Hindu Christian Dialogue', which was sponsored by the Department of Communities and Local Government. She spoke about visiting Hindu and Christian communities in London, Leicester and Preston and interviewing them about their perceptions of each other. The recent publication of her report has had a formative influence in the creation of a new national Hindu Christian Forum which is currently preparing for its official launch on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011. I will be commending this initiative at the launch alongside Hindu religious and political leaders.

In this Diwali message, I would like to extend my thanks to the whole Hindu community for contributing so much to the flourishing of Hindu Christian relations in the UK and the breaking of new ground in both research and practical initiatives this past year. I wish you all a very joyful and blessed Diwali.

† Rowan Cantuar:

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