

# Behind Me and Before Me

Based on Psalm 139

Bob Dufford, S.J.  
Keyboard accompaniment by Randall DeBruyn**INTRO:** *Calmly, patiently* (♩ = ca. 54)

Keyboard

*mf*

Db Gb Bbm Gb Ab Bbm7

Descant (Last time only) **REFRAIN** (Tempo I)

*mf*

All my life you have

Be - hind me and be - fore me you sur-round me.

Fm7/C Ab6 Db Db/C Bbm Bbm/Ab Ebm7 Ab

(Tempo I)

held me near, O Lord, in all my

You rest your hand up-on my head.

Bbm Gb Bb7 Ebm Ab Bbm7

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ways. Who could know your thoughts, O

Such knowl - edge is too won - der - ful, my Lord, too

Fm7/C Ab6 Db Gb Ab

God, to reach so high? high?

vast for me to reach so high. high.

1-3 to Verses Final

1-3 to Verses Final

1-3 to Verses Final

Db Bbm Ab6 Fm7/C Db Bbm

*Fine*

*Fine*

*Fine*

Db Bbm Ab6 Fm7/C Db *rit.*

**VERSE 1: *Faster* ( $\text{♩} = 58-60$ )**

1. When I sit, when I stand, you know me.

*p*

Bbm Fm Gb

1. When I move, when I rest, you

*mp*

Ab Ebm Gb

1. know. When I start to say a word, you know the

*p* *mf*

Db Gb F7

1. end - ing, O Lord. No mat - ter what my

*Slowing* *mp*

Db Db/C Bbm Bbm/Ab Gb

*rit.* *mf* *D.S.*

1. thoughts, still you know. Be -

*Ebm* *rit.* *mf* *D.S.*

*Ab* *Bbm7* *Fm7/C* *Ab6*

VERSE 2: *Faster* (♩ = 58-60)

*p*

2. If I soar on the wings of morn - ing,

*p* *Bbm* *Fm* *Gb*

*mp*

2. if I fly to a far dis - tant world,

*mp* *Ab* *Ebm* *Gb* *Db*



VERSE 3: *Faster* (♩ = 58-60)

3. Long a - go you knew me in my moth - er's womb, in the

*mf* *mp*

G♭ A♭ D♭ B♭m

3. dark where my bones were made. In

*mf* *mp*

E♭m G♭ D♭

3. all your works I thank you for your won - drous ways: ev-'ry

*f* *mp*

G♭ E♭m7 Fm B♭m

3. bone, ev-'ry breath, ev-'ry day. Be

*mf* *mf*

E♭m G♭ A♭ B♭m7 Fm7/C A♭6

*D.S. al fine* *D.S. al fine*

# Behind Me and Before Me

(Guitar/Vocal)

Based on Psalm 139

Bob Dufford, S.J.

**INTRO:** *Calmly, patiently* (♩ = ca. 54)

Capo 1: (C) (F) (Am) (F) (G) (Am7) (Em7/B) (G6)  
 Db Gb Bbm Gb Ab Bbm7 Fm7/C Ab6

(Keyboard) *mf* Be -

**REFRAIN (Tempo I)**

Descant (Last time only)

*mf*

All my life you have held me near, O

hind me and be - fore me you sur - round me. You rest your

(C) (C/B) (Am) (Am/G) (Dm7) (G) (Am) (F) (A7)  
 Db Db/C Bbm Bbm/Ab Ebm7 Ab Bbm Gb Bb7

Lord, in all my ways. Who could

hand up - on my head. Such knowl - edge is too

(Dm) (G) (Am7) (Em7/B) (G6) (C)  
 Ebm Ab Bbm7 Fm7/C Ab6 Db

know your thoughts, O God, to reach so high? \_\_\_\_\_

won - der-ful, my Lord, too vast for me to reach so high. \_\_\_\_\_

(F) (G) (C) (Am) (G6) (Em7/B) (C)  
 Gb Ab Db Bbm Ab6 Fm7/C Db

1-3 to Verses

1-3 (C) to Verses

**Final** *rit.* *Fine*

high? \_\_\_\_\_

**Final** (Am) (C) (Am) (G6) (Em7/B) (C) *rit.* *Fine*  
 Bbm Db Bbm Ab6 Fm7/C Db

VERSE 1: *Faster* (♩ = 58-60)

(Am) (Em) (F) (G)  
B♭m Fm G♭ A♭ *mp*

1. When I sit, when I stand, you know me. When I

(Dm) (F) (C) *p*  
E♭m G♭ D♭

1. move, when I rest, you know. When I

(F) (E7) (C) (C/B) (Am)  
G♭ F7 D♭ D♭/C B♭m *mf* *Slowing* *mp*

1. start to say a word, you know the end - ing, O Lord.

(Am/G) (F) (Dm) (G) (Am7) (Em7/B) (G6)  
B♭m/A♭ G♭ E♭m A♭ B♭m7 Fm7/C A♭6 *rit.* *mf* *D.S.*

1. No mat - ter what my thoughts, still you know. Be -

VERSE 2: *Faster* (♩ = 58-60)

(Am) (Em) (F) (G)  
B♭m Fm G♭ A♭ *mp*

2. If I soar on the wings of morn - ing, if I

(Dm) (F) (C) *mf*  
E♭m G♭ D♭

2. fly to a far dis - tant world, if I

(F) (E7) (C) (C/B) (Am)  
G♭ F7 D♭ D♭/C B♭m

2. lose my - self and dwell a - mong the dead, my God,

(Am/G) (F) (Dm) (G) (Am7) (Em7/B) (G6)  
B♭m/A♭ G♭ E♭m A♭ B♭m7 Fm7/C A♭6 *Slowing* *mf* *D.S.*

2. e - ven there you would call me home. Be -

**VERSE 3: *Faster* (♩ = 58-60)**

(F) (G) (C)  
 G $\flat$  A $\flat$  D $\flat$   
*mf* *mp*

3. Long a - go you knew me in my moth - er's

(Am) (Dm) (F) (C)  
 B $\flat$ m E $\flat$ m G $\flat$  D $\flat$

3. womb, in the dark where my bones were made. In

(F) (Dm7) (Em) (Am)  
 G $\flat$  E $\flat$ m7 Fm B $\flat$ m

*f* *mp*

3. all your works I thank you for your won - drous ways: ev - 'ry

(Dm) (F) (G) (Am7) (Em7/B) (G6)  
 E $\flat$ m G $\flat$  A $\flat$  B $\flat$ m7 Fm7/C A $\flat$ 6

*mf* *D.S. al fine*

3. bone, ev - 'ry breath, ev - 'ry day. Be -

# Performance Notes

## Imagery/Meaning

This song is based on the imagery of Psalm 139. The psalmist wrestles with the experience of God's offer of intimacy, as if the soul says, "You are all around me, in all the places I go, and all the places with me. Sometimes I relish it and rest in it; sometimes I am afraid of it and run away." The issue is trust. Do I trust this closeness not to be intrusive but, rather, a special blending of courtesy and familiarity? The response of the soul to such a tender yet respectful offer is gratitude, "every bone, every breath, every day."

## Highlights

The refrain should have the character of calm and simple joy.

Verse one is episodic, using a series of three teasing forays, as if the soul is testing the limits of God's presence and watchful care. Each phase begins with a rising energy (e.g., "When I sit, when I stand"). Sing it with rising intensity, so the energy is released with a realization that God would know.

Verse two is another series of three wayward wanderings. This time the energy is not released in each phrase. Each phrase builds on the preceding one, climaxing with "lose myself and dwell among the dead" (an image of self-destructive behavior). The three phrases are followed by an act of trust in the intimacy offered by God: "even there you would call me home." This last part should return to the tenderness of the refrain.

Verse three starts with the melody of the second half of the first two verses. Its energy should rise quickly to "knew me" and then diminish with "mother's womb, in the dark..." The second half of this verse is a strong, grateful response to the faithful care of God, the high point of which is "I thank you." It ends with another series of three measures expressing the complete thankful response, "every bone, every breath, every day." The phrases should be sung in a way that reflects the deliberate self-gift, perhaps with a break between each one.

## Performance Suggestions

The refrain tempo should be a bit slower than the verses, connoting a gentle resting in the presence of God. The verses probe the limits of that presence; they are more self-conscious and a little less restful. At the end of each verse, the tempo should calm again to match the refrain. In the third verse, the melody begins in what was used midway through in the other verses. It should start stronger than the other two.

## Liturgical Usage

This song is useful for Communion, the beginning of a retreat or day of recollection. It is also appropriate for services with a theme of intimacy and times of reflection.

—*Bob Dufford, S.J.*

# Assembly Edition

## BEHIND AND BEFORE ME

Bob Dufford, S.J.

Refrain

Be - hind me and be - fore me you sur - round me. You  
rest your hand up - on my head. Such knowl - edge is too  
won - der - ful, my Lord, too vast for me to reach so high.

Verse 1

1. When I sit, when I stand, you know me. When I  
1. move, when I rest, you know. When I  
1. start to say a word, you know the end - ing, O Lord.  
1. No mat - ter what my thoughts, still you know.

to Refrain

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## BEHIND AND BEFORE ME (Continued)

Verse 2

2. If I soar on the wings of morn - ing, if I  
2. fly to a far dis - tant world, if I  
2. lose my - self and dwell a - mong the dead, my God,  
2. e - ven there you would call me home.

to Refrain

Verse 3

3. Long a - go you knew me in my moth - er's womb, in the  
3. dark where my bones were made. In  
3. all your works I thank you for your won - drous ways: ev - 'ry  
3. bone, ev - 'ry breath, ev - 'ry day.

to Refrain

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