

## LET THE LIGHT OF YOUR FACE SHINE ON US

Responsorial Song from Psalm 4 for Easter 3B  
for Cantor, Assisting & Descants I+II  
with Keyboard, Organ & Guitar

TONY BARR

*Let the light of your face shine on us.*

If you are God of justice, would you hear my cry?  
Are you the One who released me from distress?  
Then may the light of your face shine on us.

Are you the Source of life for us, we your faithful ones?  
Would you come rescue us in our time of need?  
Then may the light of your face shine on us.

What makes us joyful, many ask, what lifts the heart?  
Where would we turn to find hope and we seek?  
Then may the light of your face shine on us.

Should I lie down, at peace, would you help come at once?  
Might I find safety in your arms, would you find me?  
Then may the light of your face shine on us.

Generally, the translations we use of the psalms are predicated on the idea of God's protection, and likewise grateful for the same. But as a liturgical poet and theologian, I have problems with this. The first assumption is that God is the Supreme Spirit who alone exists of Himself and is infinite in all perfections (according to the scholasticism). And secondly we always, and only, speak in a prescribed, authorized manner.

I offer two suggestions. The first is that in the demonstrative syllogisms of Thomas Aquinas, we really know nothing at all about God. The second is that as meaningful prayers, are we ever allowed to question them? Our editions are sweet renditions, edited after Israel's return from Exile. The psalms, once dramatic Temple rituals, were reduced to become pious reflections, appropriate for the synagogues, now devoid of the high ritual of Temple worship.

What do I mean about *real*? Are we only allowed assumed confidence when we address God? Or do the psalms, as in yes, express the feelings of people, especially our doubts and uncertainties? Are we ever allowed to question things, even if it makes sense? Must they always enshrine the status quo, allow no space for light or freedom?

In this setting, clearly inspired by the Dutch poet Huub Oosterhuis, I have attempted to put myself into the mind of the psalmist in real time. There is no doubt that these songs were originally direct, no-holds-barred, ways of speaking with the Deity. They were songs of Covenant, and as such were dialogues, conversations about things which mattered with the One who had called them. They did not rely on platitudes or cliché, but the raw emotions of the human heart. And our hearts beat every second of the day, resonating with uncertainty, but with affection. In the Psalms we find the true expression of humanity, confronting the One who is the meaning of life, of our existence. We have no need to hide behind muted language which would silence our voice.

- Tony Barr

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# Let The Light Of Your Face Shine On Us

*Responsorial Song from Psalm 4 for Easter 3B*

INTRO  $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 54$

E C#m A B G D C#m B

REFRAIN

*Flute on selected Refrains*

*Descants I+II select either or both on alternating Refrains*

Let the light of your face shine on us.

All

Let the light of your face shine on us.

E C#m C#m A F#m E

**SAMPLE**

VERSES Cantor or alternating Cantors

1. If you are God of jus - tice, would you  
 2. Are you the Source of life for us, would you  
 3. What makes us joy - ful, man - y ask, would you  
 4. Should I lie down, in peace with you, would you

E C#m D

1. hear my cry? A - rise, O God, the who re -  
 2. faith - ful ones? You have your come res - cue us  
 3. lights the heart? We would we turn to find  
 4. sleep come at once? Find safe - ty in

C#m E

1. leased me from - tress?  
 2. in our need?  
 3. hope, whom shall we seek?  
 4. you a - lone? Find my self?

F#m C#m F#m G#m

to Refrain

The light of your face shine on us.

F#m G#m A B

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REFRAIN ♩ = ca. 54

& text from Psalm 4 Tony Barr

Descants I+II select either or both on alternating Refrains

Let the light of your face shine on us.

All  
Let the light of your face shine on us.

VERSES Cantor or alternating Cantors

1. If you are God of \_\_\_\_\_ tice, \_\_\_\_\_ would you  
 2. Are you the Source \_\_\_\_\_ life \_\_\_\_\_ us, \_\_\_\_\_ we your  
 3. What makes us joy \_\_\_\_\_ man \_\_\_\_\_ ask, \_\_\_\_\_ what de -  
 4. Should I lie down, \_\_\_\_\_ face with you, \_\_\_\_\_ would \_\_\_\_\_

1. hear my cry? \_\_\_\_\_ you the One who re -  
 2. faith - ful ones? \_\_\_\_\_ you come res - cue us  
 3. lights the heart? \_\_\_\_\_ Where would we turn to find  
 4. sleep come at once? \_\_\_\_\_ I find safe - ty in

1. leased \_\_\_\_\_ from dis - tress?  
 2. in \_\_\_\_\_ time of need?  
 3. \_\_\_\_\_ should we seek?  
 4. a - Find my self?

1. Then may light of your face shine on us.

*to Refrain*