

KO UN

An Outcry

Sunlight,
our much-traveled friend,
reaches us
from ninety-three million miles away,
(to say nothing of starlight's hundreds of light years,
or mysterious gamma rays from thousands of light years away),
a friend, coming all that way
to guide our lives and dreams.
Where could we find another friend like that?

Yet sunlight
cannot penetrate the sea around us.
After piercing just a few hundred meters
it's stopped
and so light's long journey
comes to an end, in the dark.

In that dark,
in place of sunlight
the creatures idly swaying under the sea
make light
by their own sounds alone.

There's no other way.
Even on dry ground, in the dark
we're obliged to make light by our voices.

At this moment, a dim outcry
keeps my ears from sleeping,
like all my comrades throughout the world.

*Translated, from the Korean, by Brother Anthony of Taizé, Young-moo Kim,
and Gary Gach*