

## Personal Reflection – 2021

### Considering Silence

As I sit on a summer's day in North Carolina on my back porch, in the midst of an historic pandemic and political chaos, after an intensely active life of learning and teaching, I cannot help but wonder and ask: "How can I serve? What can I do?"

I am acutely aware of the lavish gifts that I receive daily: good health, sweet and caring friends and family, enough resources to live well, and a community of faith. I cannot walk far, even with my cool red walker, and I do forget stuff: "Did I have breakfast?" Words take their time to come to me. I tell myself: "Don't chase it. It will arrive," and it does.

I realized recently that the pandemic-incited quiet in my home has enabled a new quality of listening. Not a new quantity, a new quality. The newness is uniquely *new* and strange. I have felt like this many other times in my life, as part of my work when I landed in a strange new country and a different culture. It is all new and different! I cannot talk much because I do not know the language of quiet. I listen to more than words: to nature, to what people do, to events, to the meaning I offer to what I hear! I am learning to listen. Imagine!

As a relentless educator, I need to share this experience, hoping that your reading this will give you joy, make you laugh and allow you to join me in this hopeful view of the unexpected, surprising, emerging life of an old lady in 2021.

Enjoy!

by Jane Vella