Who in your life is a good friend? The one you spend the most time with? The one who is there when life gets hard? The one who checks in regularly? The one you just seem to have a natural connection with, even if you don’t see each other often? Maybe it’s the same person for all of these questions. I think all of these can be good friends. However, some of those people we spend the most time with may not be a good friend. Maybe they’re a convenient friend or someone we simply put up with. I’ve quoted Henri Nouwen a few times lately (you might even think I’m reading a daily devotional by him!) and here’s another great one.
“When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.”
And honestly as great as it is to have friends who I can just sit and chit chat with or complain to or even discuss topics with, a real good friend is the one Nouwen describes above. Even if I only see that friend once a month or a few times a year, I’d rather have one person who will know when to listen and when to speak. One who will just hug me without a word of advice or correction when life is hard. One, like Nouwen says, who will ‘face with [me] the reality of [my] powerlessness’. That, to me, is a good friend.
And I’ve been amazed how many good friends I have in this community. Honestly, I don’t see myself as a very good friend often, but so many here have been a good friend to me. And truly that’s what it takes for a community to grow and to thrive. It takes listening to and hearing the words of someone else and accepting them as a fellow human being. Someone who has felt the same hurt and pain and anger that I have faced. And it’s in that comradery of being human that should unify us. And patiently and humbly caring for each other’s grief that we ‘carry each other’s burdens’ as Paul reminds us to do (Gal 6.2).
And so my prayer continues to be that we find ways to put aside our differences and disagreements to truly relate to other’s story and find unity in our community. God bless.