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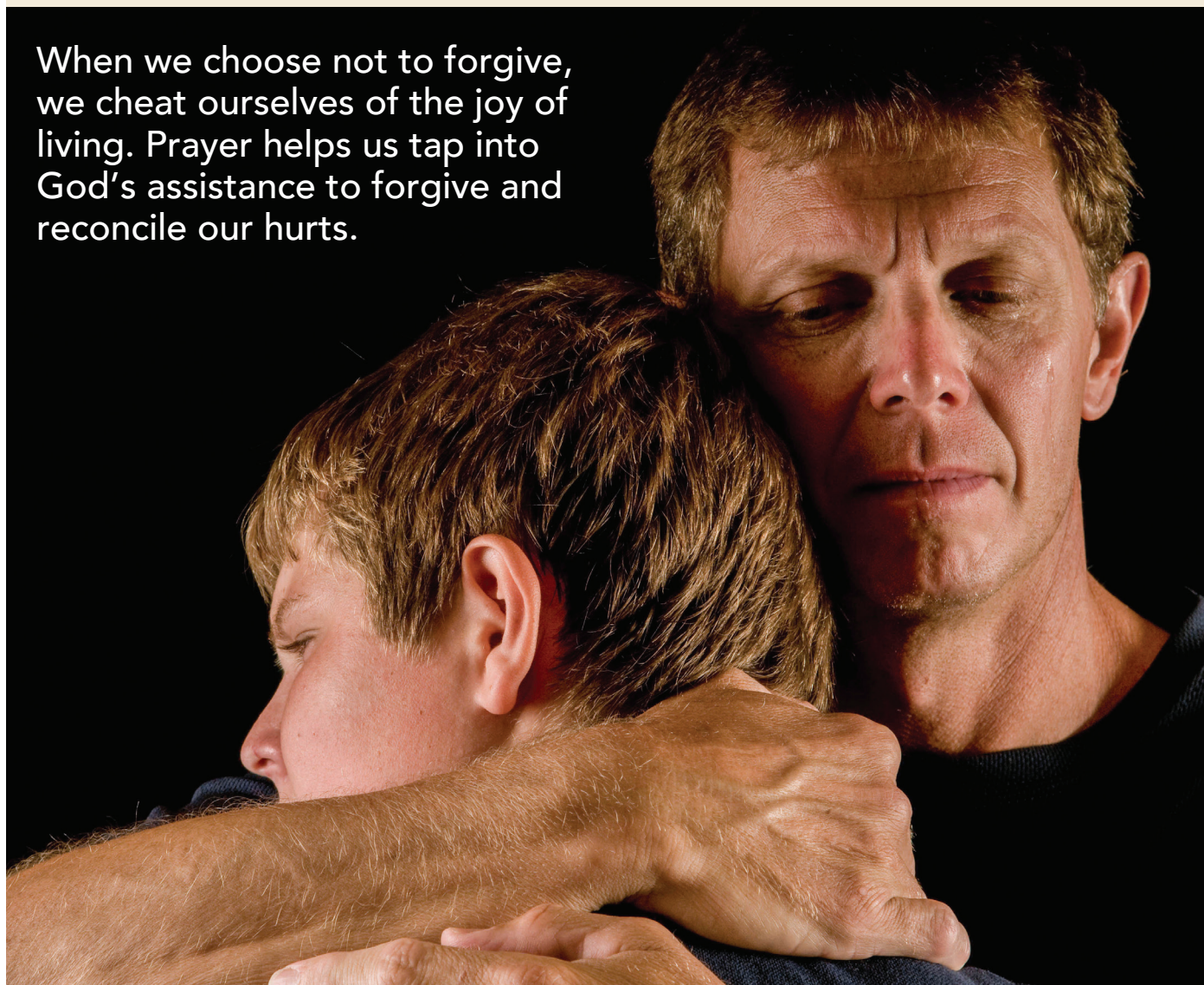
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Learning to Forgive

STEPS TO RECONCILIATION

BY FATHER EAMON TOBIN

When we choose not to forgive,
we cheat ourselves of the joy of
living. Prayer helps us tap into
God's assistance to forgive and
reconcile our hurts.



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Following Jesus' command to forgive life's hurts and injustices is surely one of life's greatest challenges. Many people believe that it's *impossible*, if not foolish or even stupid, to forgive someone who has deeply offended us or done us a grave injustice. Why should anyone forgive such people?

When we choose not to forgive, we knowingly or unknowingly choose to cheat ourselves of the joy of living. When we harbor resentment in our hearts, our resentment becomes the lens through which we see reality. We see others, not as they are but how our resentment wants us to see them.

PRAY TO FORGIVE LIFE'S HURTS

Prayer can be a helpful spiritual resource when we're struggling to forgive and reconcile a hurt. Prayer can help us forgive another person—living or deceased, God, the Church, and ourselves. Prayer helps us tap into God's assistance.

Before we begin to pray for the grace to forgive, it's important to give expression to the feelings around the hurt or wrong done to us—rage, a desire to punish or get even, anger, or a sense of betrayal. We may use a journal to safely vent our feelings. Naming, owning, and giving expression to our real feelings is an important first step when it comes to dealing with life's hurts and injustices.

***PRAYER OF RAGE:** When we've been deeply hurt, we likely feel anger, rage, and hate. We want to get even and punish our offender. Our first prayer needs to give expression to our rage. Many of us may never have prayed a prayer of rage and may feel it's wrong to say such things to God. Yet, consider what Jeremiah said to God about his enemies: "Why does the way of the wicked prosper, why do



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