St. John of the Ladder
FAMILY ACTIVITY
Fourth Sunday of Great Lent

Materials needed:
Masking tape, marker, staircase or paper ladder

Mini Lesson:
Discuss the life of St. John Climacus and the book *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. Paraphrase the story from www.goarch.org/sunday-stjohnclimacus.
Show the icon of the ladder and explain that the ladder represents our path in life and how we want it to lead to Christ. When we're on the ladder, we are surrounded by angels to help guide us there. However, the dark figures are meant to remind us of temptations that can pull us off the ladder and away from Jesus. The bottom part of the icon shows a life without accepting Jesus's love is lived in a dark place.

- The icon shows us that we can get tempted to leave the ladder, but we have to stay on track!

Activity:

- You can either use a staircase in your own house or you can create a ladder on a wall in your house with either brown paper strips or with masking tape.
- Once you have picked the staircase or created the ladder, you can begin with the next step. (Make sure it is in a place that you will see it often!)
- In the book *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, St. John Climacus describes each "rung of the ladder" as a virtue that we need to work on in each of our lives. Take a look at the list on the next page to see modified and family-friendly version of the topics.
- As a family, choose one "virtue" a day to work on together. Each day of the week, take a piece of masking tape and write down the virtue that you want to work on and stick it to each step or rung of the ladder.
- Every day throughout the week, as a family, walk up each step or go to each rung as it grows and say "God grant me patience and love to be _____ (more humble, loving, less prideful, etc…).

Conclusion:
This activity will help the whole family work together to include these virtues in their everyday lives, especially during Great Lent.

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The Ladder of Divine Ascent

	Original, for monks and nuns (by St. John)	Modernized, for lay people (by John Mack)
1.	On renunciation of the world	Turning our backs on the world
2.	On detachment	Holding all things with open hands
3.	On exile or pilgrimage; concerning dreams that beginners have	Living as strangers
4.	On blessed and ever-memorable obedience (in addition to episodes involving many individuals)	Practicing obedience
5.	On painstaking and true repentance which constitutes the life of the holy convicts; and about the prison	Turning our backs on sin
6.	On remembrance of death	Remembering our mortality
7.	On joy-making mourning	Being realistic about life
8.	On freedom from anger and on meekness	Bending without breaking
9.	On remembrance of wrongs	Letting the past be past
10.	On slander	Keeping our mouths shut, part I
11.	On talkativeness and silence	Keeping our mouths shut, part II
12.	On lying	Speaking the truth
13.	On despondency	Escaping from boredom
14.	On that clamorous mistress, the stomach	Controlling our eating habits
15.	On incorruptible purity and chastity, to which the corruptible attain by toil and sweat	Keeping ourselves pure
16.	On love of money, or avarice	Letting go of the things that hold us, part I
17.	On non-possessiveness (that hastens one heavenward)	Letting go of the things that hold us, part II
18.	On insensibility, that is, deadening of the soul and the death of the mind before the death of the body	Getting serious
19.	On sleep, prayer, and reciting psalms with the brotherhood	Staying awake
20.	On bodily vigil and how to use it to attain spiritual vigil, and how to practice it	Staying alert
21.	On childish cowardice	Facing our fears
22.	On the many forms of pride	Humbling ourselves
23.	On mad pride and (in the same step) on unclean blasphemous thoughts; concerning unmentionable blasphemous thoughts	Beating pride
24.	On meekness, simplicity, and deceitfulness which come not from nature but from conscious effort, and about deceit	Living meekly
25.	On the destroyer of the passions, most sublime humility, which is rooted in spiritual perception	Developing humility
26.	On discernment of thoughts, passions and virtues; on expert discernment; brief summary of all aforementioned	Discerning God's will for our lives
27.	On holy stillness of body and soul; different aspects of stillness and how to distinguish them	Learning how to be still
28.	On holy and blessed prayer, the mother of virtues, and on the attitude of mind and body in prayer	Seeking union with God through prayer
29.	Concerning heaven on earth, or Godlike dispassion and perfection, and the resurrection of the soul before the general resurrection	Growing beyond our passions
30.	Concerning the linking together of the supreme trinity among the virtues; a brief exhortation summarizing all that has been said at length in this book	Achieving the heights of the virtues