

Dominican Sr. Terry Rickard, foreground, on the leadership team of the Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt, joins others in hauling up the mainsail of the Hudson River sloop Clearwater during the Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation. She said she participated as a way to stand up for environmental protections under threat. "It's a counter to despair," she said, also citing the late Pope Francis' strong environmental appeals. "We have to make a stand that is hopeful." (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)



by Chris Herlinger

View Author Profile
cherlinger@ncronline.org

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Cold Spring, New York — October 1, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

It was a pilgrimage embracing the holiness of the river.

On a sunny and warm September afternoon, and in an act of communion and reverence, nearly 50 people representing sister congregations, Catholic and non-Catholic environmental groups, and religious and secular allies journeyed up New York's Hudson River to honor its sacredness and embrace continued efforts to clean it.



Participants settle in on the Hudson River sloop Clearwater. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)

The Sept. 5 Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation, aboard the Hudson River sloop Clearwater, was organized by Religious Organizations Along the River, or ROAR, and the Metro New York Catholic Climate Movement.

- 

Nearly 50 people representing sister congregations, Catholic and non-Catholic environmental and religious and secular allies journeyed up New York's Hudson River for the pilgrimage. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)

- 

Sisters representing ten congregations were among the participants in the Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation aboard the Hudson River sloop Clearwater. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)

- 

Members of the pilgrimage aboard the Hudson River sloop Clearwater, which was organized by the Metro New York Catholic Climate Movement and Religious Organizations Along the River, or ROAR. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)

- 

  Pilgrims dockside at Cold Spring, New York, before the Sept. 5 "Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation," aboard the Hudson River sloop Clearwater. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)

The three-hour expedition, which began and ended at Cold Spring, New York, about 60 miles north of New York City, was marked by prayer, reflection, song and discussion — all affirming the need to revere and respect the Hudson. The waterway extends more than 300 miles from the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York, all the way down to New York Harbor in New York City and into the Atlantic Ocean.

- 

The Hudson River sloop Clearwater docked at the harbor of Cold Spring, New York, following the Sept. 5 Hudson River Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)



Cold Spring, New York, the send-off point of the Sept. 5 Hudson River Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)

Though efforts to clean the Hudson have accelerated in recent decades, environmental advocates say protections from further harm — including the dumping of leachate liquids from sewer plants — must continue and even expand.



John Lipscomb, center, a retired boat captain and activist with the environmental watchdog group Riverkeeper, spoke of growing up on the Hudson River, "learning to swim in it, sail on it" and working at a boatyard that "depended on it." But Lipscomb said it was not until he became involved with Riverkeeper that he began to appreciate the river "not as a resource to use, but as a fellow living being — a living being powerless to defend itself; a living being that was waiting for me to wake up and help it." He said that was part of the reason he and others were "out here today — to be river protectors, not just river users." (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)

"Our hope was to be with the Hudson River and experience it as a living being, with its own right to exist, flourish and thrive," said Sr. Carol De Angelo, of the Sisters of Charity of New York, long-time ROAR member and director of her congregation's Office of Peace, Justice, and the Integrity of Creation.



Sr. Carol De Angelo speaks to pilgrims during the afternoon journey. The pilgrimage "allowed time to be with other pilgrims, colleagues committed to and caring for the river, and to listen and learn from this living river, once a dying river, that has come back to life" she said of past environmental damage to the river and efforts — still ongoing to clean the Hudson. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)

The significance of the Hudson River pilgrimage, she said, was that "it allowed us time to recognize and appreciate the gift and sacredness of water, and the waters of the Hudson."



A ritual of connection as participants in the Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation placed their hands in the river water, silently offering a prayer of gratitude or lament. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)



"Justice with joy" was how Sr. Didi Madden, a member of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, described her participation in the pilgrimage. "Being here today is a joy," she said, and an antidote to "despair" over today's political environment. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)



The mast of the Hudson River sloop Clearwater as the mainsail is being hoisted. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)



Dorothy Calvani, a lay member of ROAR, leads participants in song in front of a view of the Hudson River looking north. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)

The Sept. 5 event was part of global efforts to affirm the Jubilee Year's Season of Creation, which ran from Sept. 1 to Oct. 4.

Advertisement

Fourteen sisters participated. The congregations represented included the Sisters of Charity of New York; the Dominican Sisters of Hope; Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt; Dominican Sisters of Sparkill; Sisters of Mercy; Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace; the Ursulines of the Roman Union; the Maryknoll Sisters; the Sisters of the Divine Compassion; and Our Lady of Christian Doctrine.



Nancy Lorence, right, a founding member of the Metro New York Catholic Climate Movement, speaks to pilgrims during the afternoon journey. Evoking the spirit and message of the late Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical Laudato Si', Lorence spoke of seeing everything in creation as being related. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)



GSR correspondent Chris Herlinger, with Dominican Sr. Terry Rickard, left, and Sr. of Mercy Catherine Darcy during the Sept. 5 Hudson River Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)



Sr. Veronica Mendez, representing her congregation, Our Lady of Christian Doctrine, which sponsors the Marydell Faith and Life Center. She said she participated in the pilgrimage as an "act of defiance" against institutions that show "a lack of respect for all of creation." (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)

Reflecting on the event later, De Angelo said the afternoon was punctuated by short pauses — "singing chants, dipping hands into waters of the Hudson, hearing stories of life in the Hudson River, the quality of its water, how climate change is affecting it, calls to action."



Looking across the Hudson River from Cold Spring, New York. (GSR photo/Chris Herlinger)