

One of the Lord's witnesses (John 1:1–14)

## **When this woman heard what she thought to be true about the movement of God among us, she testified.**

by [Cleophus J. LaRue](#)

December 23, 2016

*To receive these posts by e-mail each Monday, [sign up](#).*

*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

In John's prologue, the light shines in darkness and is not overcome--but the world does not know or accept the light. A witness is needed, someone to bear witness to who God is and what God has done.

In countless black worship services, people speak different words and phrases out loud all through the service and especially during the preaching event. *Amen! Sure enough! Oh, Lord! Have mercy, Jesus! My, my, my!* And so forth. Some in the academy refer to this as "participatory proclamation." In the church we call it witnessing.

When I was growing up in Corpus Christi, Texas, there was a wonderful woman who was known for the mantra that characterized her life: *So true Lord, I'm one of your witnesses*. She said this so often that even those who did not know her by name knew her words: *So true Lord, I'm one of your witnesses*.

Through all the cacophony of the audible witnessing experience in the black church, this woman's mantra broke through. A lover of black church life, she did not confine her worship experience to her local church. She made it her business to visit churches throughout the South Texas area. Even when you did not see her enter a sanctuary, and even when she did not stand to be recognized as a visitor, it wasn't

long before you knew she was there. *So true Lord, I'm one of your witnesses.*

To the surprise of no one who knew her, she spoke these words not only in worship settings but wherever she heard truth that she thought needed a witness. When her pastor stood before the city council and admonished its leaders to pay more attention to the poor, this dear woman shouted out in the city council meeting. Her audible witness embarrassed the white city council members, but it emboldened the poor. She was willing to witness to the truth of their lived experience.

When a state representative running for re-election came to her church, he had the temerity to ask the pastor if he could say a word on behalf of his campaign. The pastor said no--and the church sat waiting for the mantra of the witness to reinforce his refusal to allow a political speech in the Sunday morning worship service. She did not disappoint, for on that day, she stood up and said in a very strong voice: *So true, Lord. I'm one of your witnesses.* Her witness spoke the truth for that congregation: While it may be acceptable for politicians to speak in some churches, it is not acceptable here.

In her later years, she slipped into dementia and began to say some things that were clearly not appropriate for the worship experience. But from time to time, even in those years, that familiar voice would ring out with the mantra that so many had come to love and appreciate. She has since passed away, but even now I can hear her voice when truths about God are spoken. Even in death her hushed voice gives witness to God almighty.

Whenever she heard what she thought to be true about the movement of God among us, she didn't hesitate to testify. The only thing she seemed to be perplexed about was the refusal on the part of others to join her in saying an audible yes to the great things that God has done.

If we say nothing else during this season of the year, and even if we only utter it in our hearts, surely we can say, at least once: *So true, Lord. I'm one of your witnesses.*