

Olympic swimmer Simone Manuel gives glory to God

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RIO DE JANEIRO (BP)—When Simone Manuel became the first African-American to win an individual medal in swimming, earning gold in the women's 100-meter freestyle, she was quick to credit God for that accomplishment.

"All I can say is all glory to God," Manuel said through tears in a post-race interview. "It's definitely been a long journey these past four years. I'm just so blessed to have a gold medal. ... I'm just so blessed."

Manuel tied Canada's Penny Oleksiak in the race with an Olympic-record time of 52.70 seconds. Manuel previously won a silver medal in Rio, her first Olympics, as part of the women's 4×100-meter freestyle relay.

✘ Simone Manuel "Coming into my first Olympics, I didn't think I was going to be getting a gold medal individually," Manuel said. "My goal was just to get more experience, swim as fast as I can. And after prelims and semifinals and seeing where I was sitting, when I came in tonight, I was like, 'I want to get on that medal stand.'"

"Just surpassing that goal and getting an American record on top of a gold medal is super exciting for me."

Manuel and her family are part of The Church Without Walls—Brookhollow Baptist Church—in Houston. Her pastor, Ralph West, is an adjunct professor of preaching at Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary.

"It makes me proud to see Simone give God the glory in this monumental moment in her life," West tweeted after the race.

Manuel insisted the medal was not just for her, but for those who have come before her and inspired her.

“And for all the people after me who believe they can’t do it, I just want to be an inspiration to others that you can do it,” she said.

After her gold medal performance in the women’s 4×100-meter freestyle relay, Manuel posted a message on Twitter saying she feels honored to represent the United States.

“God is working in me! I am so blessed and grateful,” she tweeted. “Thank you all so much for your support.”