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Navy chaplain Lt. Gordon James Klingenschmitt ended his 18-day fast yesterday by taking Communion in front of the White House. He won the right to use Jesus' name in public prayer.

## Chaplain ends 18-day fast

### Claims victory in fight to use Jesus' name

By Tarron Lively  
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A Navy chaplain ended an 18-day fast outside the White House yesterday, proclaiming victory in his bid to use Jesus' name when praying in public.

"The Navy has finally given me back my uniform and let me pray publicly in Jesus' name," said Lt. Gordon James Klingenschmitt. He said his supervisor, Capt. Lloyd Pyle, told him Friday that he can now give Christian prayers while uniformed.

Lt. Klingenschmitt, who held daily prayer vigils in Lafayette Park, lost 14 pounds during the water-only hunger strike that began Dec. 20. Before breaking his fast by eating Communion bread, he led about 40 followers in prayer, ending with "I pray in Jesus' name, Amen."

The hunger strike was intended to persuade President Bush to issue an executive order allowing military chaplains to pray according to their individual faith traditions. The American Center for Law and Justice has gathered 173,000 signatures on a petition seeking an executive order. Seventy-three members of Congress joined the request by sending a letter to the president.

"Today is the first step, and we have a long way to go before we have religious liberty in the Navy," Lt. Klingenschmitt said. He also said the issue has be-



Astrid Flecken/The Washington Times

The Rev. Patrick J. Mahoney (left), of the Christian Defense Coalition and Navy chaplain Lt. Klingenschmitt yesterday delivered a prayer in front of the White House.

come widespread among Navy chaplains since the late 1990s. Two lawsuits were filed in 1999 and 2000 against the Navy by 50 Christian chaplains, stating the Navy discriminates against evangelical and Pentecostal clerics.

"Most of those chaplains are no longer in the Navy, saying they could not get promoted and they're out on the street now without jobs, because they prayed and preached the wrong way when the government was trying to censor their prayers and sermons," Lt. Klingenschmitt said.

During the summer of 2004, he preached an evangelistic sermon while aboard the USS Anzio at the funeral of a Catholic sailor in a base chapel. After being censured by two senior chaplains, he was sent ashore in March to Norfolk.

The chaplain said he initially

feared losing his job and military housing, but doubts further action will be taken. He asserted that the Navy relented because of unwanted attention he has brought to the issue.

"For nine months, they were telling me I'd be kicked out, but as soon I declared my fast, I was on national TV the next day, and the day after that they gave me a brand-new, three-year contract."

The Navy maintains that chaplains are allowed to pray in the name of all deities — including Jesus Christ — during chapel services. However, at other public events, sensitivity to the needs of all those present is encouraged and chaplains may decline an invitation to pray if not able to do so for conscience reasons.

Lt. William Marks, a Navy spokesman, said yesterday there never were restrictions against Lt. Klingenschmitt and he is not sure why the chaplain considered himself victorious.

"The policy hasn't changed," he said. "That's the way it's always been."

Lt. Marks also said the chaplain was reprimanded for the 2004 sermon because the sermon's content was "inappropriate" for a funeral, not because he mentioned Jesus.

"There are almost 1,000 chaplains, and we cannot find one with the same problems he has had," he said.

Navy officials also said Lt. Klingenschmitt has not been formally punished, and there are no plans to take him off active duty.

Navy Lt. Klingenschmitt held his Bible during a prayer on the final day of his hunger strike.



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