Nov. 16, 1948. N. V. CASSON 2,453,892

ECCLESIASTICAL EQUIPMENT

Original Filed April 11, 1944

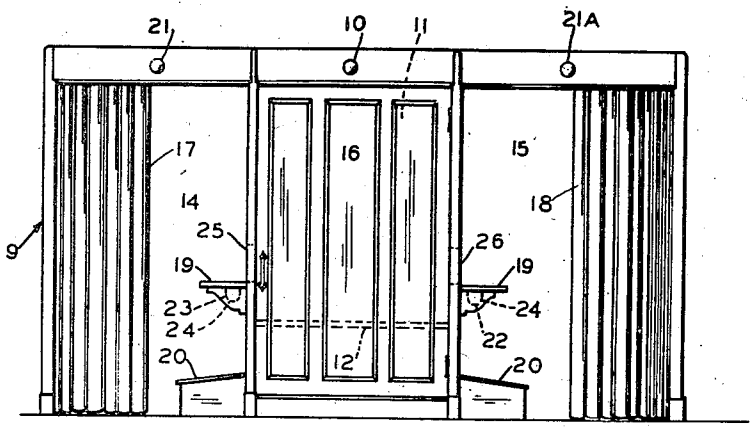


FIG. 1

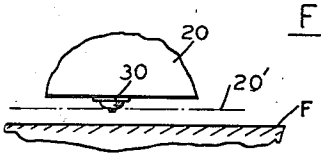


FIG. 3

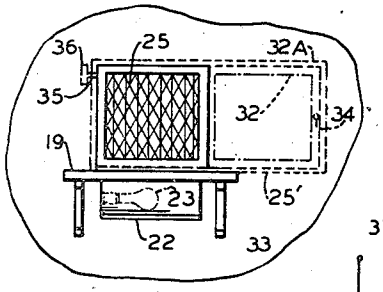


FIG. 4

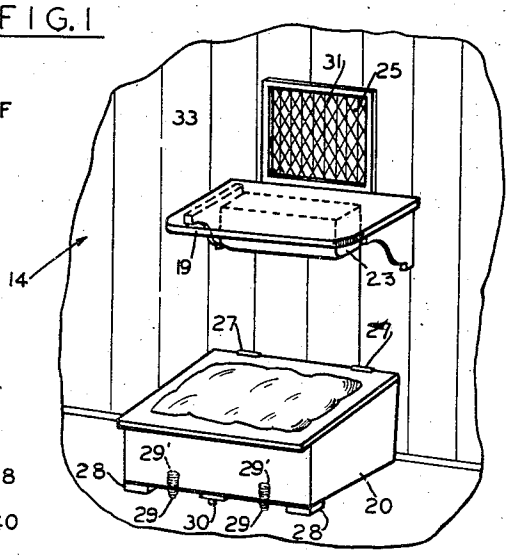


FIG. 2

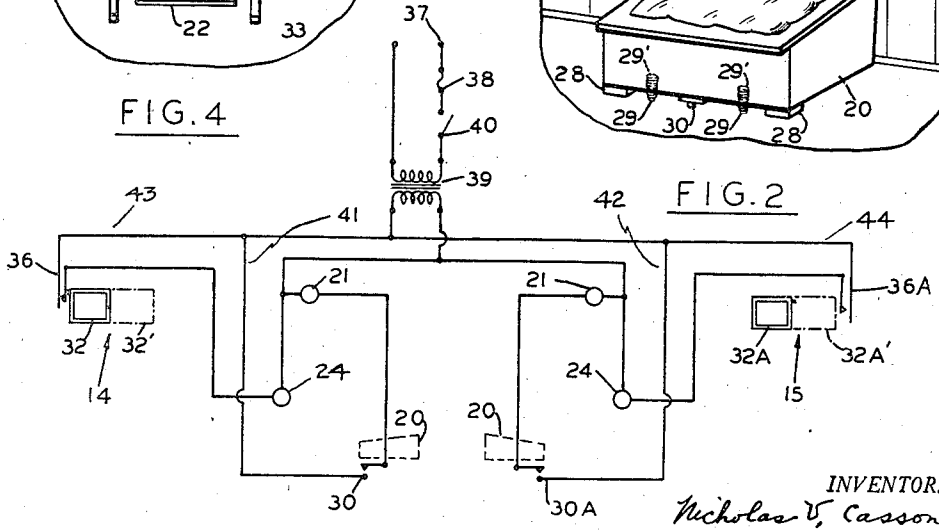


FIG. 5

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ECCLESIASTICAL EQUIPMENT

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2 Claims. (Cl. 240—2)

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This invention relates to ecclestiastical equipment.

More specifically, the invention pertains to furniture and apparatus for facilitating the administration of the sacrament of penance of the Catholic Church.

Such furniture ordinarily provides the necessary physical equipment to facilitate the administration of this sacrament, and is generally referred to as the confessional. Herein the penitent confesses his sins to, or asks advice on matters of conscience from, the priest, who then spiritually advises the penitent as he thinks necessary, states the penance to be performed by the penitent as soon as the latter can later conveniently do so, and, subject to the right disposition of the penitent in thereupon reciting what is called the act of contrition, this last including a promise to amend his life, the priest himself recites the words of absolution.

As is well known, a priest, even at the cost of his life, must not break the seal of the confessional; that is, he must not divulge to another anything stated to him by the penitent. This obligation is also on any lay person who happens to overhear any part of the confession of another. Consequently, for many centuries, the Church has provided an article of furniture, as such also by custom called the confessional, compartmented to provide a cubicle in which the priest is seated at the times announced for confession, and an adjoining cubicle for the penitent and in which he kneels as soon as he enters and remains kneeling until, his talk with the priest having ended, he leaves. A prie-dieu or knee-rest for the penitent is in each penitent's cubicle. A door or curtain offers ingress to and egress from the penitent's cubicle, and a similar openable and closable element, generally a door, is provided for the priest's cubicle. In order that one confession may follow another as rapidly as possible, however long any confession may be (and they are sometimes quite prolonged, either because of the matters having to be confessed, or the rationalistic argumentations of the penitent, or the need felt by the priest to straighten out perplexities of the penitent and very often that spiritual ailment known theologically as scruples), two penitent's cubicles are provided, one on each side of the central cubicle for the priest, and each provided with a wicket or window between it and the priest's cubicle, either wicket openable and closable by the priest. Thus a means is offered whereby a penitent kneeling in one cubicle while the sacrament is being administered to another penitent in the other penitent's cubicle cannot overhear what is said between the priest and the other penitent; it being understood that the first-named penitent's wicket is maintained closed until he is to start his confession. The wickets are opened and closed usually by a slidably movable panel. The custom is for those desiring to go to confession, as the ordinary statement is, to seat themselves or stand in line adjacent to the confessional; and one after another to enter into one penitent's cubicle or the other as soon as there is a vacating of either by the penitent then occupying the same. Due to the conditions above mentioned, especially at many times during the hours set for confessions when penitents are not waiting outside the confessional in large enough numbers to form waiting lines, and also in those cases where persons next in turn to enter the confessional have failed, because deep in prayer or meditation, to note the vacating of a penitent's cubicle, it is difficult to decide whether a particular cubicle is vacant or not. The time of the priest and those waiting to make confessions should not be wasted by having the priest open the wicket to an empty penitent's cubicle. On the other hand, it is not only embarassing, but might amount to unintentional eavesdropping, for a waiting penitent, believing a penitent's cubicle to be empty, when it is not, to open the door or curtain and prepare to enter, thereby perhaps to illuminate the lineaments of the penitent then at confession, and, in some cases, stumble over the feet or legs of the latter as he is in a kneeling position in the cubicle.

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There is herein disclosed a novel and improved confessional and apparatus to insure against any and all of the difficulties and disadvantages above outlined; which confessional and apparatus is also described, and claimed, in Patent No. 2,385,607, issued September 25, 1945.

The particular object of the invention, claimed as well as disclosed in the present application, which is a divisional application based on the aforesaid Patent No. 2,385,607, is to provide a novel and improved confessional and apparatus adapted further to assist in the preliminaries to the administration of the sacrament of penance, as will now be explained.

In practically all cases a person just entering a penitent's cubicle must wait sometime before the wicket facing him is opened; as the priest, having just heard the confession of the previous penitent in the cubicle last-mentioned, is now hearing the confession of the person in the oppo-

site cubicle. Consequently, as above explained the wicket last-mentioned is now closed; but, of course, the wicket facing the person who is now at confession is open. As has also been said, considerable time passes often before the wicket facing the person awaiting confession is opened, signifying by the sound of its opening that the priest, invisible through the grille permanently in place in the wicket frame, and which grille also makes the penitent invisible to the priest, is ready to begin hearing the confession. This waiting time for each penitent is usually spent by him in meditation or prayer. However, the use of a religious book or pamphlet for such a purpose is now impossible, due to the complete darkness of all interior portions of the confessional.

According to the invention of the present application, each penitent's cubicle is interiorly illuminated, preferably dimly, but sufficiently to render immediately discernible the location of the knee-rest and of the arm or hand rest thereabove, to make fairly clearly visible the crucifix usually hung somewhere on a wall of the cubicle, and to give a sufficiently luminous reading light, preferably by placement of the source of illumination in a location, or just below the arm or hand rest, such that this placement rather than the diffusive intensity of the light will allow a devotional book or pamphlet to be read without eyestrain, while waiting for the wicket to be opened.

Further according to the invention, to avoid unnecessary expense for lighting current, but principally to place the penitent's cubicle in complete darkness as soon as his wicket is opened, a means is provided whereby, incidental to opening of that wicket, or, rather, incidental to the first movement of the priest's hand effective to start opening of the wicket, the interior illumination of the penitent's cubicle is extinguished, thereby to make sure that the priest will not unintentionally visually recognize just who is the penitent.

Various other objects and advantages of the invention will be hereinafter pointed out or become apparent in the course of the following description of a now favored embodiment of the invention as illustratively shown in the accompanying drawing.

In this drawing:

Fig. 1 is a front elevation of a typical confessional equipped in a preferred manner pursuant to the invention.

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of a part of the interior of a penitent's cubicle, looking toward the wicket in the wall separating said cubicle from the priest's cubicle.

Fig. 3 is a detail view, showing the lower front portion of the knee-rest, the same carrying an electric switch.

Fig. 4 is a fragmentary elevational view, showing the wicket in opened and closed conditions, and an electrical switch.

Fig. 5 is a schematic view, showing various electric circuit portions, and, diagrammatically, certain of the parts also shown in Figs. 1 through 4.

Referring now to the drawing in detail, and particularly to Fig. 1, the confessional is indicated generally at 9, as having, as usual, a bulb 9 ordinarily lighted to signify a priest is in the cubicle hearing confessions.

In the confessional is a priest's cubicle 11, having a door 16 and housing a bench or chair 12 on which the priest may be seated, and a pair of penitents' cubicles 14 and 15.

In Fig. 1 also, closing curtains 17 and 18 for the cubicles 14 and 15, and knee-rests 20 and arm-rests 19, are shown.

The parts so far described are all conventional.

However, above the entrance to each penitent's cubicle there will be noted an electric light bulb 21 or 21A, these in the present case being the signals aforesaid, as now favored.

The means for as aforesaid intermittently and automatically illuminating the interior of each cubicle 14 and 15 are indicated in Fig. 1 as lamp-shade-type casings 22 and 23 carried at their tops below the arm or hand rests 19, 19; the source of illumination in each casing 22 or 23 being an electric light bulb therein, these indicated at 24, 24.

Also indicated in Fig. 1 are the wickets, marked respectively 25 and 26.

In Figs. 2 and 3, the parts just mentioned are shown in better detail; this showing being of a part of the interior of the penitent's cubicle 14.

The knee-rest 20 instead of being built in solid or immovable as usual, is hingedly mounted as at 27, 27. Desirably, such hinges are of the loose-pin type, so that the pins or pintles can be readily removed and the knee-rest easily demounted for inspection, adjustment or repair of the elements next to be described.

At the front or swingable bottom portion of the knee-rest it is shown as provided with rubber or equivalent cushioning feet or stops 28, for easy and noiseless drop of the knee-rest from say the position indicated at 20' to the floor F of the cubicle 14 when the penitent by kneeling on the knee-rest frees the weight of his body to depress the knee-rest against the means for normally maintaining the knee-rest somewhat elevated at its front end. This means is here shown as a pair of expansile coil-springs 29 positioned to act while held in place in suitable retainers on the bottom of the knee-rest, these retainers being cup-shaped as indicated at 29'.

A normally open switch 30, shown as of the common push-button type, is then closed, substantially immediately after a penitent enters a penitent's cubicle, and as soon as he leaves such a cubicle said switch has already a second before been opened.

Referring to Fig. 4, where the wicket 25 of the cubicle 14 is again shown, and covered as usual by a sight-obstructing screeen or grille 31, a horizontally slidable panel 32 is indicated as mounted in guide tracks 32A on the far or priest's side of partition wall 33.

This panel is by means of a thumb-knob 34 moveable by the priest so as to close the wicket 25, or to the position indicated at 25' to open the wicket.

The wicket is also shown in Fig. 4 as carrying a nose-extension 35, the function of which is to close a normally open switch 36 when the wicket is closed, but to free said switch for spring-urged opening at the first start of an opening movement of the wicket by panel movement.

The light bulb 23 is in series with said switch, as is the bulb 24 with a similar switch 36A in the other cubicle 15 of the two penitents' cubicles.

Referring finally to Fig. 5, the panel 32 is shown as having been slid from its open position 32' to closed position in the cubicle 14, while the corresponding panel 32A for the cubicle 15 is shown as having been slid from its closed position 32A' to its open position. Therefore, the switch 36 is now

closed, and the corresponding switch for the other cubicle 15 is open, this last switch being marked 36A. At the same time, if there is a penitent in either or both of the cubicles 14 and 15, either or both knee-rests 20, 20 will be depressed, and consequently either or both of the bulbs 21 and 22 will be lighted.

In the circuit of Fig. 5, at 37, 38, 39 and 40 are indicated, respectively, a 110-volt line, a 110-volt fuse, a 110–6 volt step-down transformer, and a hand-switch. From this transformer conductors 41 and 42 lead to the switches 30 and 30A, each of which when closed places the appropriate bulb 21 or 21A in a closed circuit. Branches 43 and 44 from the conductors 41 and 42, respectively, lead to the switches 36 and 36A, each of which when opened breaks the normal current flow to the appropriate bulb 23 or 24.

It is to be understood that all matter contained in the above specification and shown in the accompanying drawing is to be taken in an illustrative and not in a limiting sense. The scope of protection contemplated is to be taken solely from the appended claims.

Variations and modifications may be made within the scope of the invention, and portions of the improvement may be used without the others.

I claim:

1. In a confessional, the combination of a priest's cubicle, a pair of penitents' cubicles each directly adjoining a different wall of the priest's cubicle, a closable opening between each penitent's cubicle and the priest's cubicle, a closure for each such opening under the control of the priest, means for illuminating the interior of each penitent's cubicle, and means controlled by said closure for automatically ceasing the illumination of a penitent's cubicle's interior on initiation of movement of the closure for the opening into that cubicle.

2. In a confessional, the combination, with a priest's cubicle, and a pair of adjoining penitents' cubicles, of a means for illuminating the interior of each of the two last-mentioned cubicles alternatively, there being an opening between each penitent's cubicle and the priest's cubicle, a movable closure for such opening operable by the priest, and means responsive to movement of the closure for either opening to cease the illumination of the penitent's cubicle having that opening, said means including a means operable normally to interiorly illuminate artificially each penitent's cubicle.

NICHOLAS V. CASSON.

REFERENCES CITED

The following references are of record in the file of this patent:

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