

*James Dempsey
and John Butler:
Pioneers of
Australian Catholicism
1802-1838*



Paul Chandler, O.Carm.

Cover Image: stained glass window of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. It depicts the first public Mass known to have been celebrated in the Colony on 15th May 1803, by Fr. James Dixon, in a house in Sydney. He was an Irish political prisoner transported to the colony in 1800, was given a conditional pardon and for a short time permitted to perform his clerical functions. Fr. Dixon is shown wearing makeshift sacred vestments that had been run up from domestic curtain. Fr. Dixon's permission to function publicly was later withdrawn by the Governor, and he left Sydney in 1808.

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¹⁵⁵ W.W. Burton, *The State of Religion and Education in New South Wales*, London, 1840, quoted in Patrick O'Farrell, (ed.), *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 2 vols., Melbourne, 1969, 1.39-41.

¹⁵⁶ "Fitzpatrick Letters", 26.

¹⁵⁷ O'Farrell, *Documents*, 106-108; *Australian*, 7 Feb. 1834. The other signatories were Adam Wilson, Roger Murphy, Andrew Byrne, Thomas Higgins, John Leary, William Reynolds, Andrew Higgins, M. Burke, John O'Sullivan, Edward Redmond; J.H. Plunkett and Thomas Connolly signed a codicil.

¹⁵⁸ Walker, *James Dempsey*, 40-41.

¹⁵⁹ Will of James Dempsey, Supreme Court of NSW Probate Division, no. 901/1.

¹⁶⁰ Walker, *James Dempsey*, 40-41.

¹⁶¹ According to Sainty and Johnson his gravestone inscription said 7 February (no. 1210), but the burial was on 12 Feb. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 Feb. 1838) and such a long delay is unlikely. Probate records give 10 Feb. as the date of death.

¹⁶² An Emigrant Mechanic [Alexander Harris], *Settlers and Convicts*, [London, 1841], repr. Melbourne, 1869, 54-55.

¹⁶³ An attempt in 1980 to acquire it from the Botany Cemetery Trust for safekeeping was unsuccessful.

¹⁶⁴ The permission of the Provincial of the Society of Jesus in Australia to quote the following letters from the Therry Papers in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, is gratefully acknowledged.

