

BELL RINGING ON APRIL 9, 2015
TO COMMEMORATE THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SURRENDER CEREMONY AT
THE APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE

On April 9, 2015, our nation will mark the 150th anniversary of the surrender ceremony at the Appomattox Court House, which came to symbolize the beginning of reconciliation throughout the United States for a nation torn apart by civil war. The terms of General Lee's surrender were intentionally lenient as President Abraham Lincoln wanted to demonstrate to people in the South that they had a place in America. Confederate troops were paroled, allowed to keep their side-arms, their horses and their possessions and urged to return to their homes.

One-hundred-and-fifty years later as we commemorate this event, we all can benefit from the words with which President Lincoln concluded his second inaugural address just weeks before the war ended:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish, a just and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

With a sense of respect for those who have labored these many years to act on President Lincoln's vision and with a profound sense of hope for the future, we, the Catholic Bishops of Illinois, having met at our annual spring meeting, call on all of our parishes, schools and religious houses in this Land of Lincoln to ring their bells at 2:15 p.m. CDT on April 9, for four minutes. This will be done to coincide with the very hour of the ceremony at Appomattox, leading to the end of the four-year Civil War and to an end to slavery in the United States, which came in December of that year with the ratification of the 13th amendment. We invite all citizens at the ringing of the bells to pause and say a prayer for our nation in the spirit of President Lincoln's inspiring words.