

Judge's faith helped spark vision for Patriot Week

BY [ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD](#) SEP 4, 2013 [LOCAL](#)

Judge Michael Warren and his daughter, Leah, help plant a “Liberty Tree” during Patriot Week celebrations in 2012.

Pontiac — If Judge Michael Warren hadn't become Catholic in 1993, he would never have founded Patriot Week.

“As an adult convert, one of the things you learn about in RCIA classes is the liturgical calendar,” said Warren, the Oakland County circuit court judge who co-founded the annual Sept. 11-17 Patriot Week in 2009 with his then 10-year-old daughter, Leah.

“I believe that we have the liturgical calendar because it makes us stop in the hustle and bustle of our day to renew our faith,” Warren said, explaining that he borrowed the idea of celebrations throughout the Catholic liturgical year when crafting the civic celebration of Patriot Week.

This was an exciting concept for Warren, who was raised “irreligiously,” having traveled the paths of both atheism and agnosticism from grade school through law school.

Near the end of law school, however, “the Holy Ghost found me and said ‘you're going to become Catholic,’” Warren said.

Oakland County Circuit Judge Michael Warren and his daughter, Leah (speaking), created Patriot Week in 2009 as a nonpartisan civic celebration commemorating the anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution. Warren says his Catholic faith was an inspiration for the idea.

He came into the Catholic Church at St. Ives Church in Southfield in 1993, and his Italian Catholic grandfather was proud to be his sponsor. (St. Ives closed in 2007 and is now part of the new Church of the Transfiguration Parish.

)A longtime history buff, Warren could not help but be reminded of his newfound faith while researching for a book he was writing on American history.

In writing his 2007 “America's Survival Guide: How to Stop America's Impending Suicide by Reclaiming Our First Principles,” Warren found that the concept of civic holidays — stopping the busyness of one's day and celebrating one's country — were not far removed from the concept of Catholic holy days.

He realized that just as the liturgical celebrations renew the Catholic faith, “we should renew our faith in our country,” he said. “There are lots of reasons why our country is in trouble, but one is that we've cheapened our civic calendar.

"This struck him especially while discussing the issue with his daughter. He pointed out as an example that while Americans should be spending Memorial Day remembering fallen soldiers, it is instead "a three-day weekend to wear white and have a barbeque.

"I was talking with my daughter who at that time was 10, and she got very upset and said 'Dad, it shouldn't be this way. We need to create a new celebration for America,'" Warren said.

And that sparked the idea of Patriot Week.

Working to renew America's spirit by celebrating a nonpartisan annual week of events, father and daughter joined forces to deepen citizens' understanding of the blessings of freedom.

Held between the Sept. 11 anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks and Sept. 17, the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution, the individual days focus on certain founding principles, founding fathers, key historical documents and flags from America's past.

Recognized by resolutions in the Michigan House and Senate — and with permanent recognition pending — their idea has also spread to New York, Ohio, Colorado, Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Washington state, Washington D.C.

, and Illinois. More information about Patriot Week can be found at Patriot

Week.

org.

"I think we take for granted the blessings of liberty that we have," Warren said. "The idea is to awaken people to how unique we really are in the course of human history, and that we have a solemn obligation to protect our freedom.

" St. Faustina to hold 9/11 memorial service

St. Faustina Catholic Church (formerly St. Edmund), at 14025 E. 12 Mile Road in Warren, will hold an ecumenical memorial service at 7 p.m. Sept. 10 in observance of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. As an opportunity to pray for peace and human equality, the general public is invited, especially firefighters and police officers, to this patriotic commemoration. The Warren Symphony Orchestra, interfaith clergy, non-Catholic and Catholic congregations, and archdiocesan priests of Polish descent will take part and be led by Fr. Bogdan Milosz. For more information, call St. Faustina Parish at (586) 772-2720.