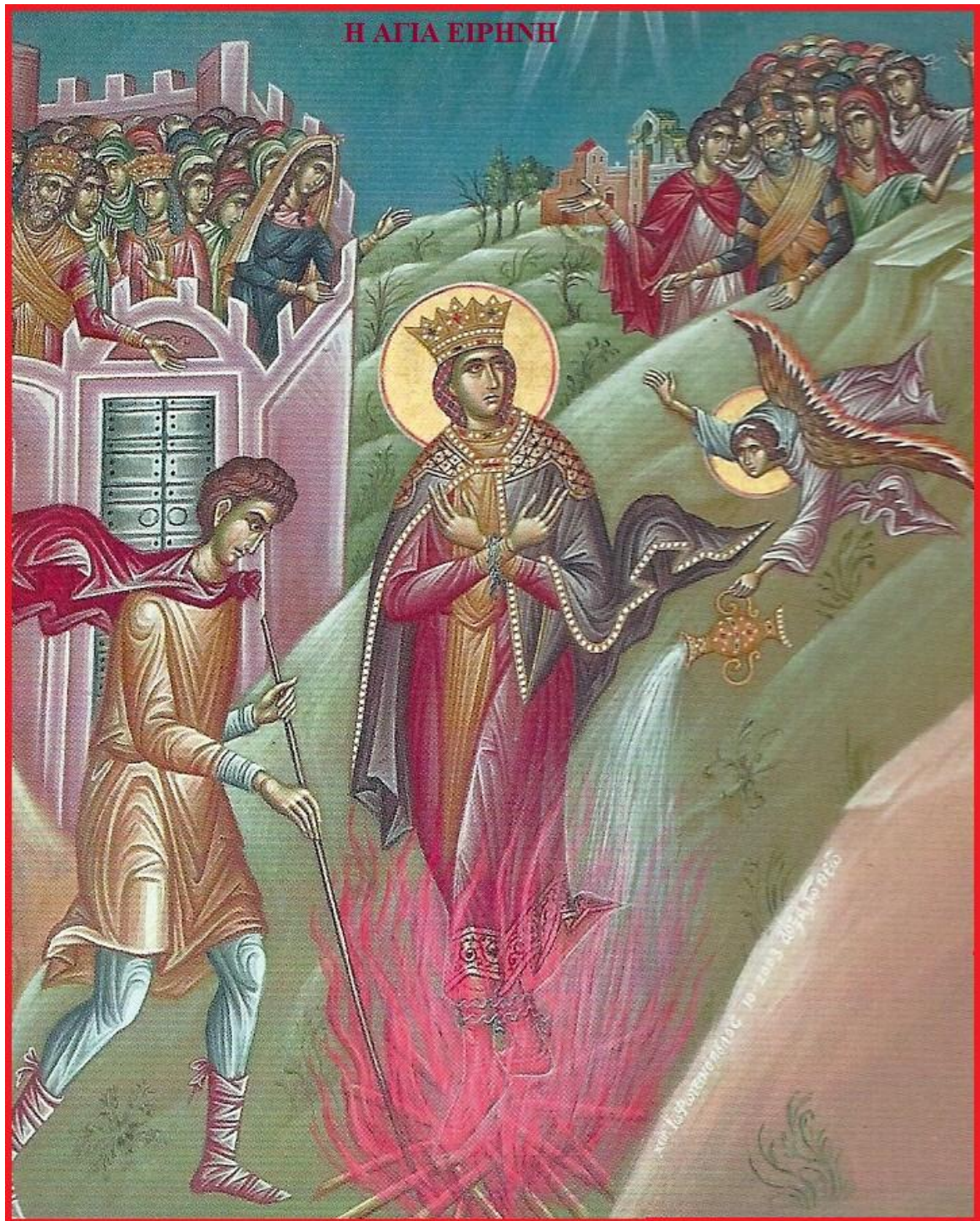


St. Irene the Great Martyr (5 May)

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The holy Great Martyr Irene was born in the city of Magedon in Persia during the fourth century. She was the daughter of the pagan king Licinius, and her parents named her Penelope.

Penelope was very beautiful, and her father kept her isolated in a high tower from the time she was six so that she would not be exposed to Christianity. He also placed thirteen young maidens in the tower with her. An old tutor by the name of Apellian was assigned to give her the best possible education. Apellian was a Christian, and during her lessons, he told the girl about Christ the Savior and taught her the Christian Faith and the Christian virtues.

When Penelope reached adolescence, her parents began to think about her marriage. One day, a dove flew through the window carrying an olive branch in its beak, depositing it upon a table. Then an eagle swooped in with a wreath of flowers in its beak, and also placed it upon the table. Finally, a raven flew in carrying a snake, which it dropped on the table. Penelope was puzzled by these events and wondered what they meant. ([περισσότερα...](#))