

## VOM-USA Prayer Update for December 28, 2012

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*As we've celebrated and reflected on the Savior's birth this month, instead of our usual prayer requests, please enjoy this excerpt from our year-long devotional book, **Extreme Devotion**.*

### **"Have you ever smelled fresh hay?"**

Aristar, the farming lad, began his story. "It's like someone captured the essence of spring and bundled it before it could lose its newness. Mary and Joseph must have smelled it when they arrived at the manger after their long journey."

The other prisoners listened intently as Aristar spoke naturally of the nativity. "The horse's ears would have turned towards the Savior's cry as soon as he was born. They are great listeners, as we should be when Jesus speaks."

Outside the Romanian prison of Tirgul-Ocna, the snow was six feet deep on a bitterly cold Christmas Eve. The prisoners had few clothes, little food, and barely one blanket each. They all missed their families and turned to listen to Aristar's story of Christ's birth for comfort.

He continued, "The light of the star must have been brighter than the moon. It may have shone through the stable's doorway and made the rooster crow announcing Christ's birth." The prisoners listened and wept. After the story, someone began to sing, gradually swelling to echo in the clear, crisp air. Everyone stopped to listen to the beautiful sound.

Even in the harsh prison, the story of Christ's gift warmed the hearts of many. Because Christ is the foundation, one can never lock out the spirit of Christmas.

*Sure, Christmas is an annual celebration. Christmas is much more than that, however; it happens in the hearts of all people who stop to celebrate the magic of Christ's entry into the world--regardless of the season. The Christmas spirit of warmth shines into our darkest circumstances and reminds us of our hope in Christ. Regardless of whether or not we see snow on the ground, colored lights, and a decorated tree, we can celebrate Christmas. Whatever you're going through, Christ was born to help you in your time of need. His mercy extends all year long. When was the last time you felt the hope of Christ alive in your soul? Take time today to celebrate the birth of Christ--into your world and into your heart.*