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## **Germany: Government asks to “avoid large gatherings at religious celebrations” over Christmas. Wide range of streamed Masses.**

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has today presented to the Bundestag the new restrictions agreed with the Federal presidents. The measures, that will come into force on 1 December, include “avoiding large gatherings during religious celebrations” over the Christmas season. The Churches and Federal States will now have to agree on the measures and procedures needed to meet the Government’s guidelines. German Catholics already have a website at their disposal with information on when and how they can watch the streaming of Masses, from the first Sunday of Advent (29 November) to the Baptism of the Lord, on 10 January 2021. From the webpage <https://fernsehen.katholisch.de/fernsehgottesdienste/advents-und-weihnachtszeit2020>, they will be able to choose and access the celebrations that will be broadcast either on TV, radio or online. For each celebration, a note will indicate whether it is a Catholic or an evangelical service. The programming of the celebrations to be aired on TV on 25 and 24 December is already available: besides the masses and the evangelical services, there will also be proposals for families, around the nativity scene or listening to a concert. Also, due to the pandemic, a Catholic Mass and an evangelical service will be aired on the ARD and ZDF channels all Sundays of Advent. “I am very grateful to the broadcasters for their great commitment”, said Bishop Gebhard Fürst, president of the Media Committee of the Bishops’ Conference. Despite the pandemic, “we can celebrate religious services together, we can experience friendship and solidarity”. The Churches in Germany have remained open, although only a limited number of faithful is allowed at the celebrations.

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