ASF Guidance for 2021 Lent/RCIA Liturgies

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Ash Wednesday

1) Remind people that Ash Wednesday is not a holy day of obligation, and they should not feel obligated to attend if in a “danger” category for COVID.
2) Distribute ashes by separate swab for each recipient, or by sprinkling a small amount of ashes on the crown of the head; is by priest, deacon or Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist (“EME”)
3) Several Liturgies of the Word may be scheduled to diminish numbers at each celebration.
4) Small packets of ashes may be prepared for families/EMEs to take home to homebound, or persons bring small baggie for ashes.
5) Gloves should be worn by those distributing and discarded safely after the rite.
6) Additional recommendations:
   a. Parents apply ashes to forehead of ages 5 and under in case they move and eye is poked.
   b. Distribute ashes at stated hours without liturgies; just with simple prayer.
   c. If have Mass, 1 procession for both ashes and Communion—receive ashes, then Eucharist.

RCIA

1) Rite of Election (RCIA Manual paras. 118-128)
   a. Pastors are delegated to conduct the rite.
   b. Can be celebrated in Mass or in a separate Liturgy of the Word.
   c. Can be celebrated on a day other than the 1st Sunday of Lent (e.g., a weekday).

2) Rite of Calling Candidates to Continuing Conversion (RCIA Manual paras. 446-449)
   a. This is an optional rite according to the manual.
   b. May be combined with Rite of Election of Catechumens or done separately.

3) Scrutinies
   a. Catechumens should not be required to participate in optional/dispensed rites if they are uncomfortable being present in groups.
   b. 1st and 2nd scrutinies are dispensed if pastor desires (RCIA Manual para. 20). 3rd scrutiny cannot be dispensed, but should be celebrated with briefest rite.
   c. Highly recommended that any celebrated scrutinies be done during a weekday Mass—or even in a Liturgy of the Word—to decrease numbers in the church

4) Presentations: These are optional rites even normally. Should be celebrated during the week (as normally done) if desired.

5) Sacraments of Initiation: to be discussed at Presbyteral Council

Of course, the general COVID sanitation/protection/attendance protocols are to be observed.