In some ways missions were like small towns. They provided for the spiritual and physical needs of the people that lived within their protective walls.
Since the chief goal of the mission was to convert Native Americans to Catholicism, the church was the main building. Along with regular mass, religious ceremonies like weddings, baptisms, and funerals were held at the church. The church at Mission Espada in San Antonio is seen here.
Mission churches served people in both life and death. Mission cemeteries meant believers could be buried on consecrated, or holy, ground. This is the church and cemetery at Mission San Jose in San Antonio.
Beautiful stone arches line the walkways at mission San Jose in San Antonio. Arched walkways like this were common in European churches and religious houses.
Decorative gardens helped beautify a mission and enhance its aura of peace and spirituality. Vegetable gardens helped feed the inhabitants. These gardens at mission San Jose in San Antonio sit outside the friars' quarters near the church.
1) Misión Corpus Christi de la Ysleta
1682

1st permanent European (and Spanish) settlement in Texas.
In 1682, the Tigua people built a permanent structure out of adobe and, in October of that year, the building was named La Misión de Corpus Christi de San Antonio de la Ysleta del Sur in honor of the Tigua's patron saint, Saint Anthony (San Antonio).

The mission is located in the only city where the Tigua lived.
Over the next two centuries the mission was relocated several times due to flooding of the Rio Grande. In 1829 one such flood washed away the structure. The flood also resulted in the river cutting a new course further south and the area where the church had been located was no longer considered a part of Mexico but of the Republic of Texas.
Most Spanish activity in what is now Texas during the 1690s was in the eastern regions, near French Louisiana. Fearing that La Salle’s arrival in 1685 would result in French settlements, Spanish officials moved quickly.
As soon as they heard of La Salle’s construction of Fort St. Louis, they sent troops to destroy it. An expedition reached the site on April 22, 1689, only to find the fort deserted and in ruins.

This is a map of the French fort drawn by a member of the Spanish expedition that discovered the French colony in 1689. It marks the river, the colony's structures, and location of cannons.
The first Spanish mission in East Texas was dedicated on June 1, 1690. It was a crude log building and contained only a few simple furnishings. Named San Francisco de los Tejas, the mission was located a few miles west of the Neches River, near the present-day town of Weches.
Fray Damián Massanet (also known as Friar Damián, or Father Damián), was a Catholic Church official who asked permission to found the mission among the Tejas, a sub-tribe of the Caddo Indians.
Soon after being built, the Indians rejected assimilation and the mission was abandoned. Although it was not long in use, San Francisco de los Tejas accomplished two things:

- First, its presence strengthened Spain’s claim to Texas.
- Second, the struggles faced by the friars and soldiers made Spain realize that a successful colony needed families to settle the land.
3) Misión San Juan Bautista

“Gateway to Spanish Texas”
It was nearly ten years before Spain founded another mission in Texas. That was San Juan Bautista, built in 1699 for the Coahuiltecans. It was located 35 miles south of the Rio Grande. Within a few months, the Spanish decided to move it closer to the river, only five miles from away, in present-day Guerrero, Coahuila, Mexico.

Over time, San Juan Bautista grew in size to include three missions, a presidio, and a town. Because of its strategic location, it served as a stopping point for groups traveling into the Texas interior. For this reason, it was given the name “The Gateway to Spanish Texas.”
One of San Juan Bautista’s founders was Father Francisco Hidalgo, a friar who had known the Tejas people of San Francisco de los Tejas. For over ten years he had asked Spanish officials to rebuild the mission for the Tejas. Desperate, Hidalgo wrote a letter to the French governor in Louisiana, asking the French to build a mission. The letter was sent in secret, without the Spanish officials’ permission.
Word eventually got out. Worried about French plans for occupying East Texas, the Spanish decided to secure the area for themselves. To claim the land for Spain, the Spanish ordered new missions to be built in East Texas, 26 years after Mission San Francisco de los Tejas failed.
Spanish officials soon saw the need for a colony midway between settlements along the Rio Grande, like San Juan Bautista, and the new East Texas missions. The 500-mile journey from the Rio Grande to East Texas was dangerous. Supplies came to the missions slowly, if at all. Although forbidden by Spanish law, the people of East Texas had no choice but to trade with the French of Louisiana or starve. A Spanish presence midway along that journey would make supplying the missions easier.
4) San Antonio de Valero (the Alamo)
The Spanish chose a site on the San Antonio River as the best place for the new settlement. In 1718 they built **Presidio San Antonio de Béxar** on the west side of the waterway. An official named Martín de Alarcón oversaw the work. This settlement was the basis for the modern city of San Antonio.
Many of the soldiers sent to the presidio brought their families and settled permanently. The men farmed and built irrigation canals that could be used to water the farmlands. They also hunted game in the surrounding lands. The women helped with the farming, cooked, cleaned, and cared for the children. The settlement began to grow and eventually became a town.
Across the river, another friar (his name is not important) founded Mission San Antonio de Valero for the Coahuiltecans. The mission chapel, which was built a few years later, is now known as the Alamo. Eventually the San Antonio area had **five** missions.*

*On your map, you must include all five. On your worksheet, you only have to include the Alamo.
San José y San Miguel de Aguayo
San Concepción
San Antonio de Valero
San Juan
Misión San José y San Miguel de Aguayo (also known as San Jose)
Detail of entryway for the church at Mission San Jose
Detail of entryway for the church at Mission San Jose

Rose Window at Mission San Jose
Tower of church at Mission San Jose

Detail of Tower at Mission San Jose
Mission San Jose

Entryways into the Indian dwellings at Mission San Jose
Indian dwellings at Mission San Jose

Lintel and doorway inside the Indian dwellings at Mission San Jose
Ceiling in Indian dwellings at Mission San Jose

Loophole in defensive dome tower at Mission San Jose
Loophole in defensive dome tower at Mission San Jose

Outdoor oven at Mission San Jose
Well at Mission San Jose
Misión Concepción, San Antonio
Towers of Mission Concepción

Detail of decorative painting on stucco at Mission Concepción
Detail of decorative sun painting on stucco at Mission Concepción

Vaulted chapel at Mission Concepción
Arched walkway at Mission Concepción

Entryway to the church at Mission Concepción
Ruins at Mission Concepción

Well at Mission Concepción
Grounds of the Alamo
Grounds of the Alamo

Well at the Alamo
5) Misión La Bahía
Spain took further steps to strengthen their presence in Texas. A presidio near Matagorda Bay, where La Salle shipwrecked, was given the name La Bahía and founded in 1722. (The name of the founder is not important.) Bahía is Spanish for “bay.” The next year, a mission was established near the presidio, and it came to be called Mission La Bahía.

The Karankawa, however, were unwilling to follow Christianity or move into the mission. Therefore, both the mission and presidio were relocated along the San Antonio River near Goliad, Texas. Although the mission and presidio were far from any bay at that point, they still carried their original names.
Copy and paste this URL in order to watch the video on San Antonio missions.

youtu.be/K-uMF5CsA3I