

## Stop 25 – A Franciscan’s Life

Imagine the courage needed to give up family, comforts, and security for a life of unknown challenges. A Franciscan follows the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi by meeting people where they are and responding to their needs. Franciscans are friars not monks, they are not attached to a monastery or abbey; they go wherever they are sent. Franciscans commit themselves to a life of celibacy, obedience, and poverty. Even today missionary work is considered the main activity for Franciscan Friars.

Franciscans blazed trails side by side with the original explorers of Tejas. These devout and determined men were trained in one of two Franciscan colleges in central Mexico. The primary job of these pioneers was to convert the natives to Christianity; however, an equally important goal, as agents of the Spanish King, was to create civilized and responsible citizens.

A Franciscan for a San Antonio mission was a spiritual leader, a teacher, and a community leader. He taught Latin, Spanish, and Catholicism. He showed the mission Indians how to make simple tools and musical instruments. He hired Masters to teach them a trade - how to grow crops, design irrigation systems, build permanent structures, and defend themselves with European weapons. He ordered supplies, and handed out shoes, clothes, soap, chocolate, and tobacco to the members of his community. He owned nothing. The stone structures, tools, furniture, croplands, and cattle were collectively owned by the occupants of the mission...the Indians. He established a Spanish system of self-government. He settled disputes, made duty assignments, cared for the sick, and devoted his life to the people he served.

While he had no wife or children, he was father to his native converts. The missionary instilled Spanish morality and Christian lessons through performance plays, dances, and instruction. His utmost concern was to save the souls of the indigenous people.