Why is Father Tom leaving Saint Mary’s and Saint John’s? Is it to give different churches different teachings?

I would like to begin first by stating how fortunate our collaborative has been to have Fr. Tom’s ministry. He has faithfully and pastorally served our communities for some eight years. He started at Saint Mary’s in 2011 and has remained to serve the collaborative as it began in 2015. His deep love for God and his desire to serve the people of God has been a true blessing. Fr. Tom will be missed, particularly by our younger parishioners who wonder who will give them their prayer cards.

When we think about diocesan priests, they are ordained not to serve a particular parish, but to serve the needs of the whole diocese. It is ultimately up to the bishop or—in our case—the archbishop to determine what those needs are. The role of a diocesan priest is really to fulfill the ministry of the bishop of the diocese. The bishop is not capable of being in every parish and so he needs the priests to help him in his ministry. The priest’s ministry is not separate from that of the bishop. At our ordination we make a promise to obey the bishop at all times. Part of that promise means that we serve wherever the bishop determines we are needed.

Generally priests get moved at some regular interval, usually around six years for a parochial vicar which is what Fr. Tom is. He stayed in our collaborative a little longer based on our trying to keep a little stability as we began our new journey together. His being transferred is normal based on, again, the needs of the whole Archdiocese of Boston. Part of the reason for moving a priest is just what you said in your question: but, people do not get a new teaching; they simply receive a different perspective about God. Each priest obviously has his own unique relationship with God, which helps his parishioners see things a little differently. And it is good for people to be exposed to different ways of understanding God and his message of salvation. Plus, each priest—like every person—has his own gifts and talents that can help a community grow, change, and take on the challenges of living out our faith in Christ. It is good for a community to be exposed to different approaches and gifts.

Obviously, change is never easy, but at the same time change is inevitable. The change we face as Fr. Tom moves on to a new ministry will be hard for us, and for him as well. But we must recognize that in all change God is with us and will make something wonderful arise from this.