

WHAT AILS AP?

On October 21, the Associated Press (AP) ran a story on Pope John Paul II's installation of new cardinals. AP is the most influential wire service in the nation—small and medium-sized newspapers draw heavily from its reporting. So it was with some interest that we tracked how it covered this story throughout the day (it continually updates its stories online).

Here is what the story was titled at 2:34 am (EST) that day: "Pope John Paul II to Install 30 Cardinals"—the story was repeated at 3:58 am. At 5:12 am, the tense was appropriately changed to read, "Pope John Paul II Installs 30 Cardinals." At 6:25 am, it was changed again to read, "List of 30 Cardinals Installed by Pope," and later it read as it was reported at 5:12. But by 9:53 am, we noticed something altogether different: "Ailing Pope Installs 30 New Cardinals."

Had the pope gotten weary throughout the day? Or was it the weariness of the AP reporter that was at work? Whatever it is that ails this person we'd sure like to know.