



## Florentine Venzola Downing

December 7, 1929 - May 1, 2026

FLORENTINE VENZOLA DOWNING was born to the late Deacon George Smith and Mrs. Ethell Cooper Smith on December 7, 1929, in Plymouth, NC. Her earthly address was changed on May 1, 2026, when God moved her to his Heavenly Home. Her mother passed while she was an infant. She was lovingly raised with her older siblings by Mrs. Captora Joyner Smith.

Florentine received her early education in Plymouth, NC. She had a strong desire to style hair and became a licensed beautician after successfully completing all required classes and testing.

Florentine met the love of her life, Joe B. Downing Jr. They later married and relocated to Baltimore, MD. From this union they had two loving children, Floresca J. Ross and George B. Downing. Florentine worked in several professions: home beautician, nursing aid at Rosewood State Hospital and school aid in the Baltimore City Public Schools. Florentine found her true calling and realized she had a

real

love for teaching children. She decided to further her education and pursued a career in Early Childhood Education at Coppin State College (now Coppin State

University). Florentine received a BA degree, then continued until she graduated

with a master's degree in early childhood education. She worked at several elementary schools throughout Baltimore where she made several lifelong friends.

Florentine's reputation preceded her and she received numerous accolades from

students and parents about how much they loved and learned from her.

Florentine had a very infectious personality and enjoyed life to the fullest.

Everyone

she met truly enjoyed being in her company. In May 1980, she rededicated her life

to Christ and joined The Community Church of Christ under the leadership of Rev. James Jones with her niece/daughter Joyce. She continued to implement what

she learned as a young child and prayed on her knees before going to bed until she

was unable to do so.

Florentine had a real heart of gold. She was always willing and ready to help others

whether it was just to listen, talk, or provide financial assistance, or share some of

her wisdom. She would not let anyone go hungry. She was affectionately adopted

by several of the neighborhood kids and young adults who called her "Aunt",

“Grandma”, and “Mama” by some.

Florentine truly enjoyed sitting on her porch and would talk with any and everyone who stopped and wanted to chat. Whenever she was not outside, they would ask “How is my girl?” She enjoyed her music of different genres from some old classic gospels to rhythm and blues. We would see her doing her famous chair dancing, snapping her fingers, swaying from side to side to her favorite songs. She truly enjoyed special holidays and spending time with family in Baltimore, Bowie, and North Carolina. She also enjoyed traveling with her daughter on various trips. She enjoyed playing fun games with family like Po keno and Bingo. She enjoyed reading her newspaper every day and working on the word search puzzles.

Florentine truly looked forward to her Baltimore Orioles and Raven games. She and her older brother Fred always looked forward to attending the games at the stadium, especially since they were chauffeured by her daughter Jo Jo.

Florentine was preceded in death by her parents: Deacon George Smith, Mrs. Ethell Cooper Smith and Mrs. Captora Joyner Smith, husband Joe B., children Floresca and George, brothers Monroe, Emmett, Frederick, and Thornton Smith; sisters Beryl Garrett, Mary Louise Duren, Ethel Dozier, Catherine and Eleanor Ross Smith; two nieces Linarda Tyler and Barbara Ann Stevens.

Florentine leaves to cherish her memories: grandsons Edward Ross IV (Katrell)

and Darius B. Downing, her niece/daughter Joyslon Smith-Morgan, three brothers

Richmond Smith (Sandra) of Plymouth, NC, James Smith of Mitchellville, MD and Bishop Samuel Smith (Judy) of Plymouth, NC; nephews Emmett Smith Jr.,

Bruce Tyler, Lakel Smith (Brenda), Darryl Duren (Debbie), Thornton Smith II, Kenton Smith, Justin Smith (Romeka), Otis Downing (Glenda); nieces Dianne Perry, Angelita and Aileen Dozier, Seanise and Stephanie Webb, Jenell Smith, Crystal Tyler, sister in-law Shelby Smith; three greatgrandchildren, Sh'ttera and Sharey Ross, Darius Da'Shawn Downing, Dquan Mason, one great-great granddaughter Nyna Chavis, bonus great-grandson Anthony Jones Jr., bonus nephew Lorenzo (Bugle), and a bonus granddaughters Katrell Ross and Michelle

Feaster; dear friends Shirley Heighter, Carolyn Savage, Joan Foy, Mary Smith,

Janice Hawkes, and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, friends, and several very

special neighborhood grandkids Lakia, Janyra, Jaliyah.

# Cemetery Details

## Garrison Forest Veterans

11501 Garrison Forest Road  
Owings Mills, MD

# Previous Events

## Visitation

**MAY 16.** 2:00 PM - 4:30 PM (ET)

March Funeral Homes - West Baltimore  
4300 Wabash Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21215  
(410) 542-2400  
info@marchfh.com

## Wake

**MAY 18.** 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM (ET)

March Funeral Homes - West Baltimore  
4300 Wabash Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21215  
(410) 542-2400  
info@marchfh.com

## **Celebration of Life**

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**MAY 18.** 11:30 AM (ET)

March Funeral Homes - West Baltimore  
4300 Wabash Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21215  
(410) 542-2400  
[info@marchfh.com](mailto:info@marchfh.com)

# Tribute Wall



“ *March Funeral Homes created a Webcast in memory of Florentine Venzola Downing*



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**March Funeral Homes** - May 06 at 11:28 AM



“ *We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.*

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**March Funeral Homes** - May 04 at 02:40 PM